

Robert “Red” Alexander Oral History Transcript

Interview conducted by Harvey Schwartz

March 12, 1997

Labor Archives and Research Center, San Francisco State University

1997, revised 2016

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**Labor Archives and Research Center, SFSU
Robert “Red” Alexander Oral History Transcript**

Interviewer: Harvey Schwartz [HS]

Interviewee: Robert Alexander [RA]

Date: March 12, 1997

[Begin Tape 1 – Side 1 (A) Part 1 of 10]

HS: This is March 12, 1997. This is Harvey Schwartz and I’m with Robert “Red” Alexander and we’re in Castro Valley, California.

RA: United States.

HS: Right. United States. 12 March, 1997.

Red, I was going to ask you a couple – just a couple of things like when you were born and where you were born. Some things like that.

RA: I was born in Oakland, 1916. October 16, 1916. I was born on 37th between Grove and Telegraph, North Oakland.

HS: Okay.

RA: My grandfather’s house. My grandmother – my father – lost my father in 19 –, let’s see, I was born in ‘16. That must be probably – he married my mother in 1914, I was born in ‘16, he died in ‘18. So my mother went back to work [unintelligible] went back to work and my grandmother took me – I had an Irish grandmother, come from Ireland. She was born in Kilkenny, Ireland. She came here when she was a little girl.

HS: What – how did your dad pass away?

DW: Flu epidemic, 1918. He had asthma to start with and –

HS: What had he done as a – what had he done for work? What kind of work had he done, your dad?

RA: Well, he was an engineer on a ship. At that time he was in the navy and he went to – went to England – not France, [unintelligible] France – they all came down with the flu over there and all the ship loading – he was transferred – he was on the West Gaylock with my uncle. My uncle brought him home. That’s how he met my mother. My uncle was an engineer on a ship with the fire department and my grandfather was an engineer on a ship from Scotland. My father had asthma to start with and he came over here from Scotland, they thought he’d – the climate in the desert do better for him, you know, it pretty near

killed him. So the doctors there told him to go to San Francisco because it had a [unintelligible] climate, to San Francisco than Scotland. So then he grew up in San Francisco and my grandfather worked off of some of the ships – off of the Orient, you know, the Mongolia, the Manchuria, Pacific Mail Line. That's where he met – his son – my father – he went to sea as an engineer, too, 'cause his father was an engineer and my uncle met him and brought him home and that's where he met my mother.

HS: Wow. When did your folks first come over from Scotland? Do you know when?

RA: Oh, he came – my grandfather came from Scotland around – oh, I guess – my father was born in 1888 – around the turn of the century, around 1900. But I know my uncle was on the – had the – in 1900 – the Boxer Rebellion in China. He was the one working on the Manchuria at that time, too. I guess when he met – met my father and grandfather. And they were on the Manchuria. The Manchuria and the Mongolia, I know. I got the picture in there of which one they are on.

Anyway, they were buddies on the ship and they brought him home and he met my mother. And he bought himself a motorcycle, a big Indian motorcycle. My mother said she married the motorcycle. She was crazy about motorcycles. My mother was a wild one. She'd go anywhere, do anything, you know.

HS: Well, now, your – [clock chiming briefly interrupts the interview] – so your – your dad and your granddad were basically Scottish?

RA: Yeah, my father was born in Scotland.

HS: He was born in Scotland –

RA: Oh, yeah. My grandfather came to this country, he – after he quit the shipping business, he went to work at the PG&E; engineer down in the gas house making the gas down there – the steam – run the steam up to the building. I know my grandfather – my mother told me when I'd go down, she says, that's what your grandfather does. You'd see the steam come up out of the manholes, you know, on a cold day. They'd run steam from Clay Street up to the buildings up in Oakland, and it all went through under the ground – that's where they had the heat. And he run that big boilers down there, an engineer.

And he told him, they'd say – his name was George Alexander – and they'd say, you got to have a middle name. Everybody has a middle name in this country. So he put George Washington Alexander.

HS: [Laughing] Now that was your –

RA: That was my grandfather –

HS: Your granddad. What was your dad's name?

RA: Dean Alexander.

HS: Dean Alexander.

RA: He was named after that General – they were cousins or something – remember that Dean that got caught over in China somewhere and got shot up or something? He was General Dean – well, it was on the news quite a while ago. There were cousins named after one another.

HS: I see. Ok. And what was your mom's name?

RA: Marie. Marie Barlow.

HS: Marie –

RA: Her maiden name was Barlow –

HS: – was Barlow.

RA: I think that's a big old pioneer family here. My grandfather was born – now, my mother – now, I'm talking about – I don't know much about my father's side, only that they were born in Scotland and worked on the ship. My father met my mother. They were in the service and – they told me very little about it 'cause I tell you there was a religious business mixed in between here somewhere, you know, because my Irish grandmother was Catholic and they were Presbyterian. In them days – they didn't – and they were Masons. My father was born a Mason and my grandfather was a way up high in the Masons. He was some Knights of St. George or something. They looked like an admiral. They wore a hat and sword and everything like an admiral. And the two families and they were – got together. And when I was a little kid, they took me up – my father passed away and my mother took me up to see my grandmother and grandpop up in Diamond – lived in Diamond at that time. He worked – he quit the shipping business and went to PG&E and he had a big home in Diamond, up there in Diamond. He took me up there. He had a lot of Oriental vases he'd brought from China when he was working on the ship, and I guess I knocked over one of the vases and broke it and he said, take that brat home and don't bring him back, and my mother had to have a big fight and I never saw my grandfather after that at all.

And I was little kid. I was about twelve years old, went downtown with my mother and was going across on Broadway in Oakland and she says – there was a lot of people going across there in the streets and in them days they had streetcars going up and down on Broadway – and she says, there goes your grandfather across the street. Well, by the time I looked I – well, you're looking the wrong way, you know, you look over that way. You know, I was looking all around there and just, you know, a tall wiry man among the crowd. He was very tall. You know, he went through there and that's the last time I ever

saw him. The back of his head, you know, way over across the street.

HS: Well, I'll be. What kind of work had he done when he worked on ships?

RA: Engineer.

HS: He'd been an engineer –

RA: In the engine room.

HS: In the engine room, okay. And your dad was also an engineer?

RA: Engineer in the engine room.

HS: Yeah –

RA: And my uncle – my uncle was an engineer, you know, and then he went to work for the fire department after World War I. He come back. He was on the West Gaylock too.

HS: What was his name?

RA: My uncle?

HS: Yeah.

RA: Barlow, you know – my mother's brother –

HS: Right.

RA: – he's my uncle.

HS: And his first name was?

RA: Henry.

HS: Henry.

RA: He worked for the fire department. I've got his bags in there. He put in forty years as an engineer in the fire department.

HS: I don't quite get the sequence where your – your dad went to the desert for a time.

RA: Oh, that was when he was a little boy –

HS: Oh, when he was a little boy –

RA: [Unintelligible]

HS: –When they first came from Scotland – okay –

RA: Yeah, the asthma was so bad that they thought there was – everybody had the flu – in Europe they had the flu or epidemic or some damn thing, you know, so they brought – somebody told ‘em if they went to live in the desert, he’d be cured – and it pretty near killed him. So they moved to San Francisco.

HS: So they moved to the sea.

RA: That’s how they got to San Francisco.

HS: Now you mentioned your mom went to work for the telephone company after your dad died –

RA: Oh, before. She went to work for the telephone company when she was a little girl, a young girl. They had men working the telephone company at that time and they’d give the people a hard time. They’d get drunk and they had a trolley line running down to the bar in order to get a – bring them up a beer. So somebody had the bright idea of putting women on to see if it would work better with women. Down at the old Franklin office on Franklin Street in Oakland. So my mother was about – oh, yeah, she was maybe sixteen, I guess – or fifteen. Her and another girl heard that they were hiring girls up at the telephone company so they went up to see if they could get a job. Of course, they lied about their age, I guess, too, you know. And they hired ‘em. They got – they got a job. And she worked – she was working for the phone company until I came along. And I’m here – now – she was born in – let’s see how many years that is – I guess I’ll figure it out – she was born in 1890 so she’d be sixteen, that’d be, by the time the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco – would be about the year 1906. So she must have went to work about around that time, and I didn’t come along until sixteen so there was another ten years that she worked in the telephone company. So I can figure that out pretty close there. Ten years she worked there before I was – before she met my father. Well, she met my father at fourteen. Eight or nine years anyway, but I don’t [unintelligible] –

But anyway, when she met my father he had this big old motorcycle to ride around on so then she – then I guess she was – went back in the war – World War 1 came along and he went back in the service. My uncle too. They went back in the service and they were on the ship together, the West Gaylock. For some reason they were on the same ship. But then when they went to France they shipped – my father was shipped over to Connecticut – Battleship Connecticut. And they came back. They went to Baltimore. A whole bunch of ships – they died. All the ships – the whole ship was sick with the flu. They brought ‘em back over here with ‘em.

HS: Yeah, I know. It was a big – it was a famous epidemic actually.

RA: Yeah. A lot of people died in that – we all had it at home, too. See, I was born in ‘16 and he didn’t die until ‘18, so I was home, two-year old, but I didn’t have the flu. But everybody in my – my uncles and all the others – my mother, they all had the flu, a week’s a [unintelligible] time, you know.

But anyway, my mother – when I was born she quit the telephone company. She’d been there with ‘em all them years, you know. She quit the telephone company – well, she had to, you know, in them days they were different than they are today. And then when my father died, she – you know, my grandfather, her father, he owned a [People’s?] Express years ago in Oakland. He owned an Express growing up. And there’s a big long story there, too, you know. He was born in Alameda. An old pioneer. His father came out from – over in covered wagons.

HS: This is your mom’s –

RA: I’m talking about my mom’s people now. I don’t know any more about my father –

HS: Yeah, right. That’s – let’s do your mom.

RA: – in fact, my father had a sister. And then she married a man by the name of [Bawlin] and I don’t even – I never saw her. I never did see her. And I never saw my grandmother. I couldn’t tell you what they looked like. Or my grandfather. I only have seen the back of his head when I was too young to remember anything like that.

Anyway, they – my aunt called me up one time and says, I’m your aunt. I’m very sick and I’d like to see you before anything happens to me. And I said, sure, where do you live? I’ll come over to see you. I know nothing wrong with anything like that. I know I would – I’d never – [unintelligible] fighting between the family. I was christened in both churches. I was christened in the Catholic Church and christened in the Presbyterian Church. So there was a lot of friction there at that time, so my mother told my grandfather where to go and she never saw him anymore after my father had already passed. So she had to go out and get a job. She said to him, you know, she had to support me. I mean, I wasn’t – they didn’t support me. I come here without wanting to be here – I had nothing to do with it. So she went to work in a candy store across the street from the telephone company. She went across the street and got a job there ‘cause she knew that the kids will buy candy and ice cream and stuff – it was right across the street from the telephone company –

HS: Can I ask you a question? You may not know what the answer is. By the way, sometimes I nod rather than talk because I want your voice, not mine. Most of the time. Is there any – was there any possibility that the telephone company wouldn’t take your mother back because she had a child? Sometimes they were – those companies were –

RA: No –

HS: – real old-fashioned –

RA: – oh, no. In them days, she just figured she was out so she didn't even bother going over to ask 'em. 'Cause she quit 'em, see.

HS: They have no maternity leave or any of that –

RA: No, there was nothing like that in them days. Nothing like that in them days. That was completely – they tell you to go home. If they feel like taking you back, they take you back. If they didn't want to take you back, they didn't. She didn't even bother going down to ask 'em. She went down – I don't know everything about it, you know. Maybe she went back and they didn't give her a job. Maybe she was just afraid to go back. People in them days didn't – didn't push anything in government or anything like that. They didn't – never heard of such a thing going down and saying, oh, that guy wouldn't give my job so I'll sue 'em if I didn't get a job. There was no such thing as suit. Nobody ever sued anybody for anything back in them days.

And she went to work in the candy store. So she got a good job there. Maybe they didn't pay her much – or much more at the candy store. I mean, they [unintelligible]. Anyway, one of the guys came in on a Valentine's Day to buy some for his wife and he says, "Hey, what are you doing over here?" He knew her. He was a company owner. He was a – same time she went to work for the company and he had already got an upgrading – move on the job, you know. What are you doing over here? She says, well, I got married and had a son and my husband died and had to have a job. I have to support him, you know. My mother's taking care of the boy. Well, he says, you can come right back and go to work over here. And she said, well, I'm not going back and start over again. He says, you come back, he says, you never left. He said I'll fix the books. You never left the place. Someday you'll get a pension, your pension will be from the day you start here until the last. You'll never – I'll fix it for you 'cause you're a good worker and I want you back.

So she went back to work at the telephone company. She quit the candy store and went back to work there and she got to be – finally got to be a supervisor and then on the switchboard – and then she got – later on she got to be a troubleshooter. She'd keep harmony between the girls, you know, they – overseeing – sometimes they have a problem in the office, sometimes the girls fight with one another, they'd send her out there. And they give her a car. She never learned to drive and she wouldn't take the car. She'd take the bus or streetcar, you know. In the middle of the night she'd go out, you know, in the middle of the night, you know. She worked the night shift. Always worked the night shift. And she'd go out on the night shift and they'd say, well, your car – your car and you never use it – let some other guys use it, you know. You're not supposed to do that. That car was assigned to you and you're supposed to use it – and you don't use it – you take a taxi and we'll pay the taxi. Oh, no, I don't want a taxi. I'll take the bus.

[Unintelligible] – go one place and another. They liked her. She gave forty-seven years with the company.

HS: Wow.

RA: She had a little pin, a diamond for every five years or something like that. She had so many diamonds on that. She tried to make fifty years, but she – her eyes went bad and her hearing went bad, so she – and she had varicose veins in her legs, she couldn't travel so much on the bus, so she quit. Right during the war she quit.

HS: During the war? So she worked all the way there from 1906 essentially, until the – the period of the war –

RA: Yeah

HS: Yeah, that would be moving in on that –

RA: Forty-seven years –

HS: Forty-seven years – wow –

RA: – that's not counting the three –

HS: Right.

RA: They did the same thing with me down at Pacific Dry Dock. I – I quit them at one time and they – they got me to come back –

HS: Small-time freight –

RA: Well, I worked in the same – they took over the company that I worked for. They went broke. I went to [Martinolli] – worked for Martinolli – went to work for Martinolli and Martinolli finally bought 'em out and they said, hey, will you come back and go to work for us, you know. I said, well, if you make my time like I never left you, okay. And they said, oh, well, that's –

HS: We'll get in – we'll go back into that one. But do you – you don't know the name of the guy who – who saw your mom in the candy store –

RA: No, I –

HS: Okay. For the record –

RA: No – never dawned on me –

HS: Okay –

RA: It would only be – be a guess. I probably could find it out if I'd go down to the telephone company and find out who was working – the people that was working at that time. There's a dozen guys, you know –

HS: Sure, sure.

RA: – which one would it be?

HS: And let's see, her name was – her full name was –

RA: Marie Alexander – well, Marie Barlow was her maiden name –

HS: Marie Barlow –

RA: – and then Marie Alexander when she married my father.

HS: Right. And you say that your grandparents raised you during much of that time?

RA: Her mother raised me.

HS: Her mom.

RA: My grandfather – my grandfather was Barlow. I could go under the name of Barlow. I was always on my street known as the Barlow kid, you know. I just broke a window down the street or shot an arrow through somebody's house they'd say, "That damn Barlow kid down the street, he's the one who's raising holy hell around here," you know.

HS: I see. And they were – and that's a pioneer family, you're saying, to California –

RA: – an old pioneer family –

HS: But they're Irish.

RA: Yes. Well, my grandmother was. She come from Ireland. She come from Kilkenny, Ireland. And then she married this fellow from Alameda named Barlow. But he came from – his father came over the plains and built a house in Alameda. Alameda wasn't an island then, it was a peninsula. He come in there on a covered wagon and he bought a big piece of land for twenty-five dollars and – from some Spaniard, and then he gave away pieces of the land to get neighbors to come and live next to him so he'd have back-up neighbors around him, and he got to be council in Alameda. There's a whole record of him in Alameda County. I can go to Alameda County library and get you on him.

HS: That's okay.

RA: He has a big long record on him in Alameda buying – shooting the city hall up ‘cause they raised his taxes. He shot the city hall full of holes because they raised his taxes and they took his gun away from him. I got a history –

HS: That’s great –

RA: I got his watch in there. The watch was so big he had to have a gun on the other side of to balance it – the watch was so damned heavy. Big silver watch. I’ve got his cane in there. My grandfather’s cane. 19 –, 1870 they gave him a cane. He started getting crippled up and had a cane.

HS: I see. In his –

RA: I’ll show you the cane –

HS: Okay.

RA: Do you want –

HS: Well –

RA: I’ll get it later.

HS: Okay.

RA: It’s hanging on the doorknob right there. But, no – yeah, I’ll get it. Want to see it?

HS: Sure. Ok.

[Interruption in the interview.]

RA: – but she came around the Horn, came in on a sailing ship with her father, you know, from Ireland.

HS: This is Henry Barlow’s wife?

RA: Hmm?

HS: Henry Barlow’s wife, we’re talking about?

RA: Yeah.

HS: Yeah.

RA: No, Albert Barlow, not Henry. I was –

HS: Oh, Albert. Okay, that'd be –

RA: – my grandfather. Henry was his son.

HS: So Albert is the – is his father – is Henry's dad?

RA: – father –

HS: Okay.

RA: He was a Henry Barlow, too. This one – he was a Henry Barlow too. They named their son after my grandfather.

HS: Oh, they did.

RA: After his father.

HS: But they – but your mom was Catholic. They were Catholic.

RA: Yeah. From the Irish side. My grandfather – the pioneer grandfather, he didn't belong to any religion. He never bothered with it. At the end when he was dying, at the end, an old Scotch woman come up and wanted to know, she says, "Did you get a priest for that man?" She said, "No... well, I'm going to get a priest." So they brought a priest down. Well, grandpa had a stroke, you know, and he was out – about 1927. I don't know, I was only about eleven years old. I remember my grandfather. He was a real nice guy and he was really swell to me. And – so the priest says, "I can't do nothing for him, 'cause he's out, you know. I'd have to talk to him first. We can't baptize him. He's never been baptized at all?" "No, he's never been baptized." They didn't baptize anybody in the family in them days, you know. "Well," he says, "We're going to have to baptize him [unintelligible] I'd have to have his word." So finally he came to the next day and they said – the Scotchwoman was there living with him – next to him – mighty good friend of my grandmother's – and she went back up and got the priest to come down. You know, it's three or four blocks, 40th Street down to 37th where I was born. And the priest asked him, he says, "Why – why didn't you ever – you'd like to join us?" He says, "Yeah." He says, "Why didn't you join us all these years? You're seventy-some-odd years of age, you're seventy-five." He says, "Well, nobody ever asked me."

HS: [Laughing]

RA: Good question. Nobody ever asked me.

HS: What had he been doing for work all along? You may have mentioned –

RA: Who him?

HS: Yeah.

RA: He was in the express business.

HS: Express.

RA: Moving trunks –

HS: Freight –

RA: On a – People's Express Company.

HS: Right.

RA: Him and three other fellows went in – two other fellows went into business. They were on 1st – 1st and Broadway in Oakland. My grandfather had a horse and wagon when he was just a young fellow, twenty years old or so, and then he would haul the trunks for fifty cents up to your house. And everybody had these steamer trunks in them days. They come in the Overland Saloon at 1st and Broadway. And the train came in and that's as far as they went. Then you had to get a boat or something to go to San Francisco. So everybody get off at Oakland and they'd have to transfer their trunks over, you know. They'd move 'em to your house. And then they'd – two other guys there, they thought I'll move 'em for thirty-five cents, I'll move 'em for twenty-five cents, and then, "Hey, you guys, we're cutting those – let's go into business together." So all three went into business and, you know, they opened the People's Express. I'm talking about 1870, way back in 1870.

HS: Got it. Okay. Tell me, if you could, something about your youth. I know that at one point when you were about seven, you were sailing in the bay and the boat went over and you were in the water for three hours.

RA: Oh, that's – that was – I was older than seven – I was older than seven –

HS: Oh, you were? When that incident occurred?

RA: Yeah. Well, I guess – well, seventeen, maybe. Sixteen, seventeen.

HS: Oh, you were in the teens by that time?

RA: Hmm?

HS: You were a teenager by that time?

RA: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I built the boat in the backyard.

HS: Okay. Tell me about your education then. Where you went to school and stuff.

RA: Well, I went to St. Francis' school, a private one – 'cause of my Irish grandmother, they had me go to Catholic school. So I didn't get along very good there. I mean I was their maintenance people, I done all their work for them, I mean, in the school. I fixed anything that went broke. I'd fix it for them. I had an originality for fixing things when I was a little kid, you know. I mean, my uncle – even here in the fire department at that time – he quit the navy and was in the fire department. He had a – married and had a wife and his wife died in childbirth and the grandma took – she raised all the grandkids. There were six of us, six – six cousins, first cousins all raised together. And I was the youngest of all of 'em. They were all twelve years or so above me. By the time I got to be 12 – they were twenty-four – out there and getting married, you know, leaving home. And leaving poor grandma, you know, behind.

Grandma took all the kids in and raised all the grandkids. They all had troubles. One aunt, her husband got killed by a railroad train ran over him, another one's a divorce, my father died, the other one his wife died, so they all – the grandkids all came back – grandma said, "Well, I'll take one, I'll take the other ones." She raised all the grandkids in the house. They were all raised – three girls and three boys, we were all raised together, you know, just like brothers and sisters, which – like brothers and sisters – all had different names though. And – there was Alvin and Branson and Pettier, Alexander, Barlow, [Austin?], different names, you know. We all went to Catholic schools and I did too. My mother went to St. Francis [unintelligible] school and I went there, but I didn't get along very good as far as my spelling and reading ability was terrible. But everything else was fine. History and geography, everything was perfect, you know, I mean. And I did all the maintenance for them. Started out by the shades wouldn't go up. They'd pull the shades and the shades wouldn't – they wouldn't come back down again 'cause the springs were broke. I was taught how to fix that at home. They'd put a fork under the springs, turn the fork around and get the little dog to go in and the spring started to work fine, you know.

HS: May I ask you, where – you know – you are – in the era that we're doing the taping – and you're known as a master of model building, you've been a shipwright, where did this ability come from? Do you have any idea where this ability to work so well?

RA: From my uncle. He did all the work at home, you know. He was always fixing things around the house, you know, like that. That's really about it. I don't know. Maybe something my father taught me, I know that. I mean, it can't from my mother's side – my grandfather was – he was an express manager in the union. And I – from my early days, you know, run away from school down to the waterfront and got – kind of looked – I liked boats and building boats in my backyard and models and fixing things –

HS: How old?

RA: Six years old or so, six or seven years old – drive a nail in and putting in rudders [unintelligible]. But I knew how to make things and fix things, you know – we used to make guns, shoot rubbers, you know. And put a clothespin on the back end of a gun, you know, and make a gun out of a pin. We'd shoot – they had gangs, you know – talk about gangs today. We had gangs. One gang would be in the front and that was the good guys and the bad guys would be in the backyard and they'd tried to take the backyard over, you know. Or the Indians were back there and the cowboys were out in front, you know. And if the rubber would hit you, you were out, you know, you were out of the game altogether – see how many – wipe all the other guys out. There was a [unintelligible] when I went to school. I was tall for my age and they put a [unintelligible] and pictures up on the board – up on the board and I was tall, I could reach. The sisters had me put them up for them, you know, I was their stepladder. And then they – put the flag and take it down. Washers leaked in the galley, I'd fix the washers for them. Put new washers in for them. And I taught – my uncle taught me all that at home. But he was an engineer, you know. An engineer family. It helped me with that, you know.

So I was always clever at fixing things. I still – God, I fix things over at the church. I go to this church over here and I'm constantly fixing things. I'm over there all the time fixing something for them, you know. Candlesticks, those get broken – all kinds of things get broken. I'm on call all the time to fix things. And I fix everything around here, you know – housework and everything. But anyway, I used fix everything down there.

And, you know, when the boiler – the guy that run the boiler, when they call – he got hurt. Something fell and hit him on the head down at the church and I went down. I'd run the boiler for them in the cold weather – turn the boiler on and get it going, you know. The steam heat for the school, you know. One day they figured there was no heat coming through the heaters, you know, in the classroom and I went over to look and then, in the end, told me to poke a pencil down that little valve at the end and it broke the pencil off it. I drilled it out for them and they had steam all the way down.

Oh, I was wonderful. I could do anything for them. But, anyway –

HS: Now at some point – at some point –

RA: I got mad at the whole mess –

HS: Oh, you got – you got – okay –

RA: Oh, finally, yeah, I got mad. They'd keep me back. I was two units behind, you know. And my poor mother, she worked at the telephone company – still with the company – she'd come see me. I lived with my grandmother but she'd – she got married again in 1947 – she got married again – and I didn't like the guy, I didn't want to go live with her. I wanted to stay with my grandmother. So, I lost my grandfather then and grandma had to have somebody. Actually, she took care of me over all these years, I wanted to pay her back. So the other kids were all leaving home – so I stayed home and took care of her –

take care of the place. So I had a lot of ability there, you know, fixing things up around the house. Anyway, there was someone living also – he worked in the fire department. He worked three days be on and three days he'd be gone.

So anyway, I went on to – getting dissatisfied with, you know, I wanted to – it started out by – “I want to see your mother” you know. I'd take my mother down – go down to school: “You gotta help the boy. His spelling and reading is bad, you know, it's real bad. He can't spell cat.” And I'd been in school for how many years and can't even spell cat, you know. And I don't know what the matter with me is [unintelligible] can't say anything, you know. But anyway, I finally wound up one day at the end the teacher told, “I want to see – I don't want to see him, I want to see his grandmother.” “Oh, my grandmother can't come down. She's got rheumatism, she's – we live miles from the school and she can't be doing that.” Grandmother was getting – she was getting – Alzheimer's was hitting her, she didn't know – I'd bring my report card home to sign it and turn it over and she'd sign it and never look at the other side. I'd take it back to school, you know.

HS: Red, let me turn the tape over, okay.

RA: Yes.

[End of Tape 1 – Side 1 (A) Part 1 of 10]

[Begin Tape 1 – Side 2 (B) Part 2 of 10]

HS: Okay, go ahead.

RA: She was in her eighties, then, you know, and she couldn't go down.

HS: Yeah.

RA: So one day – my mother come home tired and she says the teacher wants to see her again, you know. And the teacher told me, she says, “Don't you come back to school,” she said, “Unless you bring your mother – don't you even come back to school if you don't bring your mother.” So I told her, I said, “My mother works at the telephone company and comes home tired all the time. She can't fool with me in the morning. If I can't learn to spell cat, then to heck with it” I say. I'd get mad. I'd talk back. I made a good foreman when I got to be a foreman to be honest with you 'cause I didn't take no guff off of anybody. [Unintelligible] “Hey, my mother works at the telephone company all night, she's tired. She can't fool around with – you know, me – she's got to get her sleep.”

“Well, you either bring your mother back or don't come back to school.” Well, okay. And I went home. I told my mother. She says, “Oh, I don't want to – I'm not going down

to – I’m – you go fight your own battles.” Okay, fine, I’ll fight my own battles. And I went right on past the school and down to the waterfront. So I was down on the waterfront for years.

HS: And what year was this about?

RA: Say ’30, ’32, ’33, somewhere along in there.

HS: ’32, ’33. So you’re sixteen-ish years old then?

RA: Sixteen. I was too big for being at school, they were a bunch of little kids, you know –

HS: Yeah –

RA: I was getting – feeling kind of bad about it, you know. I wanted to get going. I was a good mechanic. I wanted to get going.

HS: I’ve got one question. There was one story that I heard about you. I think you mentioned it one time – that you used to take the nickel ferry to San Francisco to look at the models – the model ships in the city?

RA: Oh, yeah. I used to take the nickel ferry all the time over. Take my bicycle, too, for a nickel. But I used to – most of the time I went to San Francisco my – one of my aunts, my Aunt Matilda, she worked in San Francisco and she used to get a book of tickets and that book of tickets was thirty days, you know, Saturdays and Sundays and everything – but she didn’t go to work on Sunday, so she’d always give me the ticket to ride the ferry. The Key System Ferry – and I’d ride the ferry over every Sunday to San Francisco. I spent every Sunday in San Francisco. I’d go somewhere – Cliff House, or the park, the zoo, [Sutro?] Baths – they’re gone now – all the things out there are gone now – Sutro Heights, Sutro Baths – I loved that place. I loved the atmosphere. They had the flowers, you know, I love [unintelligible] – had a patio full of flowers –

HS: About what year was this approximately? What years that you –

RA: Well, in the 30s, now. You’re in the 30s. I went to work in ’34, so it had to be before that.

HS: Okay.

RA: Around in the 30s – ’31, ’32. Somewhere along in there. But I hung around the waterfront long before I went to work. I hung around down at the Market Street Pier, watch the ships going in and out. More ships there than there was ever now than at any other time – the ships coming in and out all the time – there were terminals and –. Looking back [unintelligible]

HS: This is the East Bay side you're talking about?

RA: The Bay side, yeah. I used to go to San Francisco just – on Sundays to go over on the – you had to use a ticket up, you know, to go into San Francisco, you know. She'd tear the ticket up and give it to me. Two tickets: one to go over and one coming back.

HS: Was there someplace in the city that had model ships that you visited?

RA: Oh, yeah, yeah. The de Young Museum had some beautiful ship models. There were no – there were no maritime museums at that time. The de Young had most of the ships. They had a big room full of model ships. I used to go there. And the Cliff House had a beautiful big collection of ships at one time. They burned down. They lost 'em all. It burned down on 'em. Right next to the – you know where the Cliff House is now? Well, right on this side of it where they got a – there was a stairs going down. I think the stairs going down. There was a big building there. It had all kinds of redwood furniture stuff you could buy. You know, little bric-a-bracs, like little salt and pepper shakers and all that stuff. Pictures of gales and all that – all that stuff, the bric-a-brac stuff in there. And they had – right in the corner they had model ships in there and if you liked it, you put a dime in the box – or fifty cents in the box – there's no price to go in and look at it. But if you liked it, give us a little donation to help pay for the running of the building and something, you know.

They lost 'em all. They all burned up. I used to pick out [unintelligible] and that got me – that's probably what got me started with ships and building – go home and try to make one for myself, you know. And then, of course, being on the waterfront, I'd come home and – a ship I'd try to make – you know, and I'd meet – meet some captain on a – with somebody down there and make him a little model of the ship he was on, you know.

I met these heirs. I met them. They were – the father was a captain and the daughter. I met her brother. He was – had a little boat down on the waterfront and I played with him on the waterfront. And the father invited us out to their house and I made a little model for him, you know. In fact, I've got it back in the room there. My mother give it back to me. So you can imagine how long that was, that little ship. I'll show it to you after a while. I pumped [unintelligible] lines on it, and that's way back in the early 30s, you know. And I built a couple of sailboats, my own big boats in order to sail 'em out on the water – down on the waterfront. I used to sail 'em on Lake Merritt. I had a boat on Lake Merritt. I've got it up over there on the [unintelligible] made a little model of it.

HS: Yeah.

RA: It was what we called a mudhen. It was a – it was a fast little boat, you know. We'd sail it back and forth on the lake. That was all in the 30s – '32, '33, somewhere around in there.

HS: When you would go down to the waterfront, when you were like sixteen, seventeen,

what would you do? Say, the waterfront over on this side of the bay. You mentioned you go to Howard Terminal – or you’d go to where the Luckenbach ships came in or whatever.

RA: It took a while to ride down there. It took a half an hour, an hour to ride down from my house – down there, on the bicycle. I’d go down and look at the ships and ride back home and go get a root beer after I got home, you know, at the little store there. But anyway, I just talked to people. Meet people – talk to them. There were a lot of people I knew there. Tugboat guys, you know, that had their own tugboats, you know. They’d like, take you up along the waterfront and look in boat shops when they were building boats, you know. That’s how I got started. I mean, I wanted – I met a fellow there – I went back and went to high school, you know.

HS: You did.

RA: Oh, I went back –

HS: Oh, I didn’t know

RA: Oh, yeah, I went back. I met a fellow on the pier there – there were two fellows arguing on the pier. Well-dressed men. Down at the end of Market Street Pier. The pier’s gone now, they tore it out of there. And they were arguing about – there was a ship come in there, had a – one said it was a French flag, the other said it was another flag, right near ‘em. I can’t think of the name of the flag right now – France? [Unintelligible]. There was another flag that happened to fly the same way – it was a flag – the French this way, the other goes the other way –

HS: Would that be Belgium or Holland?

RA: Belgium or Holland. Belgium, I think it is. They had the flags all look the same, though the flags flown the opposite way. So, anyway, this ship had some kind of a flag on it. But anyway, I didn’t know exactly what it was [unintelligible]. I said there was a French flag on there. But you couldn’t see the name, the name of the ship was too far out to see the name on it.

So anyway, after one fellow left, this fellow got to talking to me. I talked to him for a long time about [unintelligible]. “How come you’re not in school?” I said, “Well, I’ve not been going to school for quite a while, you know.” There’s lots of activities on the waterfront. Don’t tell me – a kid with my – is gonna waste his time. The time flew by – before I knew it, it was time to get back home so my grandma – my grandma thought I was in school all the time.

HS: This is right after you quit –

RA: Yeah.

HS: **Okay.**

RA: For years. It went on for years.

HS: **Oh, it went on for years. [Laughing] Okay.**

RA: Oh, yes.

HS: **So go ahead –**

RA: And I might stay at home if it was in the summertime vacation and she knew I was out of school. I'd stay home a little more and work on my boat in the backyard then, but while school was on I would take my little ledger and a couple little books for me and away I'd go. And that was a lot of fun. And I'd meet – there's a big boundary right there at 1st – 1st and Broadway, watch 'em make them big nuts and clip all that big steel around and they'd put it in a turner and bring it out and pound the hell out of it, you know. And I'd talk to the guy. And they all got to know me. "Hi Red!" I had red hair, you know, and they'd say, "Hi, Red," as I'd go by. And I'd watch them big – come out of those engines pulling – have them big cabs out in front, big steam – wheels back in, wheels in front. Big engines. When they went by – they shook the whole ground when they went by, you know. That was the trouble with them engines. They used to shake the track so badly they had to have a [unintelligible] behind come after them – the big pistons go around and shake the hell out of the tracks – you know.

But anyway, instead of going up – up along this river – go up there and watch the boat shops go, you know. And –well, anyway, I got talking to this fellow here just about the time I was getting interested in the yacht building business up along the – watching seamen build a yacht – watching fellow seamen and talk to them. He talked me into – "Why don't you go back and go to high school. You're out doing nothing now, you know. Go back to high school." And then I said, "Well, I don't think much of it. Too far away. Too far out." I'm not going back and start in the sixth grade. I left about in the sixth grade, I guess it was. I'm not going back to the seventh grade, you know, ninth grade again. I'm too big a – you know, a big, tall kid. "I've got a fellow named Armstrong," they said, "Now you go take – I'll give you a letter to him and you talk to him." And he said, "Let him give you an examination and see if you can go to high school if you can. Get a high school education. In the long run, it will do you good."

Well, okay, not now. I'm getting a little tired walking around the waterfront, though. You know, you get kind of bored after a while to, you know –

HS: **You didn't actually work down there? You were –**

RA: No, I hadn't started to work yet.

HS: Hadn't started to work yet, okay.

RA: I didn't start to work until – well, just about that time. I had been doing little, little things down there, you know. Not to amount to anything. Let's see. I did have – have a little job there with Cryer Boat Works for a little while. Oh, I worked – I had other jobs. Yeah, don't [talk 'nothing?'] about that. I had a job with a plumber. I worked as a plumber in my neighborhood, and I worked with a cabinetmaker for Maxell Hardware Store. Yeah, I had other jobs. I had jobs in between. Yeah, I forget about them. I had jobs. I worked for a Welshman. He was a cabinetmaker and he did a lot of work for Maxell Hardware Store, you know, they had a big store all around. And I worked for him, you know, helped him at night. I worked with him at night. He'd close the store and cut a stairway up – put in some big counter – I worked with him. He paid me. I was making money.

You know, I went to work for a plumber. I was just thinking about the other day about – I happened to think some ways about that come up, and for getting into trouble – they had a plumbing job right. I quit him because I was afraid to go to jail. He had a job – a big plumbing job over on 9th Avenue in Oakland. And he went over and went in the – he measured out all the pipe, you know, they needed the pipe – in the back – and he went over. And the house around the front – there was an old Scotch woman that lived in the house upstairs and all the pipe disappeared off the side of her house. It had the police looking – all the pipes disappearing from – put the pipe up on the house – he had me – had me go put the ladder up. I did the rigging for him up high. Put the vent pipes up. And this pipe looked peculiar, it looked like the house over. "Did you swipe that pipe off there?" And he says, "Yeah, but don't tell anybody about it." He says, "That's midnight requisition" he says, or something like that. So I go, "Well, I'm going quit you. I'm not going to stay with you!"

So the next day he got me a – "Come and help me." "I don't want to work with you no more" I said, "I don't want to go to jail. You're gonna get caught and go to jail stealing pipes." Took it off a house, put it on another house, you know! Of course, they didn't need the vents up there on her house, you know. [Laughing] Boy – pipes – off the wall!

But anyway – he had to put a heater in a church, a colored church, on [Dallin?]. The colored [unintelligible]. A colored church out on Market Street. Went down and put a – helped him – put a water heater in with him. Put the water heater – took the old water heater out and got – he wanted a hundred and thirty-five dollars for – I think it was a hundred and thirty-five dollars to put the water heater in and our labor – and the guy didn't want to pay him. The minister tried to trick him out of it, didn't want to pay him. When we were putting the water heater – in a bunch of hallways – and a bunch of gals going – nice-looking gals going by back and forth and had little rooms, you know. I said to the guy over there – one of the secretaries – one that helps him run the church work

there. Well, come to find out he says, “No, I want my money. I got to pay Red here. I got to pay him ten dollars for helping put the heater in.” So he says, I need my money.” And he says, “How about – Red’s a nice young – how about if I take it out in trade?” He wanted to take it out in trade. I said, no, I said, “What trade’s that?” He said, “Well, I can get a couple of gals, you know, they can – you know – they can take you in –” – you know what that was all about –

So, I said, “Hell, no.” I want nothing to do with that. I’m not going to even go near that damn plumber anymore. So anyway – but anyway, I went down and took –

HS: Now, did – was Red – excuse me. Was the plumber guy trying to tell you take it out in trade or was the minister fellow?

RA: The minister. The minister was going to take it out in trade. They wanted him to take it out in trade, too, and take it – they had all these gals in these rooms, you know –

HS: Yeah –

RA: – you know what that was all about.

HS: Yes.

RA: In a church! Anyway – no, we didn’t – he got his money. I got my ten dollars and he got his money. The minister was pushed out of shape because he had to give the money out of his box. Had a cigar box. Got the money out of a cigar box to pay us.

Anyway, I – I went down to this Armstrong and he got me this – got me an examination. He told me, “I’ll call you back in about a week” he says. So he contacted me and he says – he did, he call me up – come up to my house. My uncle was there at that time. “Help me talk the boy into going back to high school.” Put him into high school, tenth grade. So, he says, “Well, do you want to go to high school? I went. And I thought – it’s gonna be a while – half the time of my life in that damn high school. My biology – I took biology – my teacher was a redhead, an older woman, a redhead. Never married. She took a liking to me and – the shop teacher, “Heck.” he says “I’m wasting my time in there.” He says, “You’ve worked already outside in the trade.” They gave you a little block of wood to cut. And the guy – they got to measure and they cut twelve inches long – and they had to cut – measure off the inches and then mark it. Take out every other one, you know, straight through. And those kids had been – I know our school had already started about three weeks and there was kids working on the little blocks, trying to get those little – and they’d spoil it, you know. So they gave me a little block of wood, about twelve inches long, so wide, so thick, and a little blueprint to show how to do it. Well, first day I picked it up, I just picked up the pencil – zoom, zoom, zoom – I didn’t measure with a ruler, I just measured by hand. I had it all thought out the first night – only an hour, see. I had – he gave it to me and within an hour I had it all cut out and was just

sitting there just smoothing it up, you know. Taking off some of the little bumps. And he come along and he picked it up. And I said, "Oh, boy, what's the matter with him? And he says – he had it in hand and he says, "You're wasting your time here. You've worked in the trade outside, haven't you? And I said, "Yeah, I've worked." I already had worked on a boat job. I worked – my own boat, building boats myself at home. Well, he says, "Do you want to make a table for your – make a table or anything, go ahead and just – whatever you want to do," you know. Well, at first, I thought I want to make a breadboard so my grandma would have a great big breadboard. Had a big crack in the middle; the dough used to fall through the middle. Had to cut the edge. I didn't have a good enough saw to put – make it fine on the end, you know, hold it together. So I made that for her.

Then I took mechanical drawing. The mechanical drawing teacher, I got along fine with him. And, of course, you had to take gymnasium. That was a – I wasn't going to run around in them little monkey suits. I seen these guys march around in them soldiers and I thought, "That looks pretty good." So I went over there and seen them, marching around like a soldier. And I belonged to the Boy Scouts. So they said, "Yeah, that's fine, sign up" – your parents have to sign for you – and they said, "It'll be thirty-five cents." "What's the thirty-five cents for?" And they said, "For to keep your uniform pressed." And I said, "To hell with you." And I went back over to – I didn't have thirty-five cents!

So, but I never went out for any activity. I had a shopping news route. What they called shopping news. You had to go up and put it in the door. You had to fold – you had papers in back and front, and you pull the papers over and pull it this way and then stick it in the doorknob. You had to stick it in the doorknob. You didn't throw it on the porch. If you threw it on the porch and they saw you do it, you were fired. But, of course, if the door – they had it fixed so if people opened the door, the paper fell in and came into the house. The way you stick – you had to stick it in the doorknob a certain way so when they opened their front door – or either way, the paper went into the house, see.

HS: What was the paper?

RA: Daily – Daily something. I don't even remember. It was a shopping newspaper. It was just all about shopping. No – no – there wasn't anything about –

HS: It wasn't the *Tribune*?

RA: No, not the *Tribune* – oh, no, no. It was a private paper.

HS: What was the name of your high school?

RA: Tech –

HS: Oakland Tech – you went to Oakland Technical.

RA: I took geography and history. I graduated at the right time. I come out and I had a diploma. I don't know where it went to. My folks threw everything away when I went in the service. I went into the service right after I come out of there, you know.

HS: But now, if you graduated on time, it would have been around 1934?

RA: Yeah, uh-hum. That was when it was, yeah.

HS: When it was. Okay. And then, so you –

RA: I remember I got in the union the same time.

HS: You did?

RA: Yeah. It was right after the '34 strike in San Francisco.

HS: After the – do you remember the '34 strike?

RA: Oh, God, yeah. Right in the middle of it happened – [unintelligible]. Yeah, I remember the '34 strike. My God, they was shooting guys all over the wharf –

HS: Okay, what is the sequence of your finishing high school and then getting involved in the '34 strike? How did – how did – I mean, it's all – if I understand – if I follow you, you finish high school around June of '34?

RA: No, January – they graduated in January then.

HS: January.

RA: I was ahead of that.

HS: Okay, so you're – so around January '34. Then what happens after January – after you graduated high school?

RA: Well, I had a job over – back in the boatyard –

HS: You had a job in the –

RA: – the boatyard. They was trying to build a boat – I got a call from the – I no more than get out of high school when – I got out in January. I think it was January the 28th, I graduated. It was supposed to be the class of '33, but it was the class of – classified as the '34 class. So anyway, I went out and I – let's see, how – what happened there – I got a call from the ship boatyard, Cryer Boatwork. I'd worked for them before, Cryer

Boatwork was on Dennison Street. I got a job there. And I – I was already a union member, too. I belonged to the union –

HS: Oh, really?

RA: And the union had a split up there. My union had a split-up right at that time. They went – some went – they went broke or somebody stole the money, or what the hell it was. They went haywire –

HS: This is shipwright's union?

RA: Yeah, 19 – it was 1149. 1149. In fact, I might have – I still have the badge there on a hat. [Gets up to get hat] That'd be forty years –

HS: Yeah.

RA: That was the old union.

HS: It says – it says 1149 and it's got a – I'm looking at something on it. It's very small. I can't quite see, but it might be –

RA: It might be Brotherhood of Carpenters

HS: I think it's – it looks like the Brotherhood of Carpenters.

RA: Yeah –

HS: Are they affiliated with the Brotherhood of Carpenters?

RA: Oh, yes. It always has been.

HS: So, 1149 was – were they shipwrights?

RA: Yeah.

HS: And they were affiliated with the Brotherhood of Carpenters?

RA: Yeah, they [unintelligible].

HS: Okay.

RA: [gets up again] [unintelligible] remember now.

HS: Of what? Of 1149?

RA: Yeah. But it's gone now. 1149 is gone.

HS: Yeah. You do have a –

RA: It's out of –1149. Now it's 30 – let's see, 2236. 2236 now.

HS: 2236 now. Yeah, San Francisco Carpenter's Local 2236.

When did 1149 –

RA: Go out of business?

HS: Yeah.

RA: Oh –

HS: Oh, boy.

RA: – about maybe ten years ago.

HS: Yeah. Shipwrights, Joiners and Caulkers, Local 1149 –

RA: Yeah, we took over the caulkers.

HS: Organized 1853.

RA: Yeah, we took the caulkers over.

HS: So it's one of the old-time ones.

RA: Yeah.

HS: Okay.

RA: That wound up –stayed in that for twenty-five years – forty years, fifty years – a badge – I mean a card, you know. Fifty – I don't think they do it anymore.

HS: Yeah, that's wonderful.

RA: This comes from the maritime business. And this is Crowley –

HS: Yeah.

RA: Anyway –

HS: Yeah, let's – let's kind of go back a little ways. When did you first get a job down there with – working with 1149?

RA: Well, I went to work for Cryer and Sons. I went one day – let's see, when was that? Way back in the 30s there somewhere. I went to work. I went out on the waterfront, and – it would be around '30 – '32, '33, I guess – it would be around in there. But it was the old union that went broke. I used to look in the door – they were building a boat in there, a pretty good sized boat – and [Londo Pascucci?] was the foreman there – Pascucci – and that's how he – he could build a boat by the eye. He couldn't read or write neither, but he come from Italy and he couldn't read or write English and he couldn't read the blueprints. But he always built a boat by the eye, you know. You only just give him the width and the length and he'd build you a boat, you know. He was building a boat for the Western Fish Company there. Then he was trying to hang a plank, and he put a rope up on one end and tied the plank up with a rope and then tried to lift the other end and put it in – got it in the pipe – and it had to be twisted it some way around. And he was having a hell of a time – and I said, "Hey, why don't you let me have –" I knew him "– let me give you a hand and hold that plank up for you." So I held the plank up for him.

And old man Cryer came in, the grandpa Cryer – I worked with three generations, the father, the grandfather, the father and the son. He said, "We got a new helper here" he says. "Oh, you're the – you doing all right?" "Oh, he's doing wonderful" he says. So I said, "Hey, get me a job in here, you know, I'd help you out. I know a bit about the boats over there." "Oh, yeah? Go and talk to the old man." He said, "I need a boy to help me put these planks on. Give him a job." I started at three dollars a day. Fifteen dollars a week. Oh, I was on top of the roof. I had a good job. Not all this monkey business, – putting plumbing – pipes in or – or filling – painting a house or putting those broken windows in someplace, you know.

Anyway, I had a solid job. And, of course, I was getting fifteen dollars a month from the government, you know, from my father's death, you know. That was coming straight from my grandmother. We had enough money during the Depression. Fifteen dollars went a long way, you know, in them days. Fifteen dollars would pay the water, gas and the light bill, and the newspaper and the laundry. All on fifteen dollars, you know, back in them days. We used to send the sheets out, you know, and the white shirts out to the laundry. The rest of the clothes we washed ourselves. No washing machine.

But anyway, we –

HS: So you –

RA: I went to work there –

HS: And now did you go – join the union at that time?

RA: Yeah, I – I wanted to get in the union. There was an old saying – I just wanted to get – I wanted to try to get a sheet metal job. I knew a man who was a sheet metal worker, and I got a job as a sheet metal worker on – over at the – putting the Grambling Theater in around out in the front. And I – I thought I was going to get a job. Then I got thrown off – the union threw me off. And they said, “Hey, you can’t hire – the boss can’t hire you. You got to hire from the union.” “Well, I’ll join.” “Oh, we got too many men in the union!” That was the score back in the depression years. They were – union halls were all full of men looking for jobs. And they wouldn’t take nobody in, see. In other words, there was an old saying, to get a job today, you have to be in the union, or you get in the – you know, you had to have a job to get in the union. Now they had you going and coming, see. You had to have a job to get in the union, you had to be in the union to get a job. Now, where do you stand, see? You’re lost. You can’t get on it.

The main thing is to get a job. If you get a job someplace, then I thought, gee, now I’m smart and I’ll get into the union now. They threw me off the last couple jobs and I – but this guy – another outfit – I know a couple of good-headed guys in the union so I – the head man in the union was a good friend of mine. Next time I come, I’ll talk to him on the phone and I’ll talk to him, see. Well, he talked to me – two guys came up from the office – not the steward who goes around – two of the bigger guys came out, see. One fellow with the name of Nelson, he come out, and they said, “We heard you want to join the union.” “Yeah, I want to join!” “What do you want to join the union for,” they say. Well, I say, “So if I get bounced off of this job I can come down to your hall and get me another job.” And they said, “Well, we got too many men down the hall now.” Well, I said, “Heck, I don’t figure I” – They said, “You think you can handle a big – big job outside?” And I said, “Well, pretty well,” but I said, I’d like – maybe I – “can I start as an apprentice?” “Yeah, we can take you in as an apprentice.” Well, okay, take me in as an apprentice then.” Well, an apprentice only cost – it only cost me about forty or fifty dollars to join the union, and it only cost me ten dollars to join – to be an apprentice. And that’s if I go four years – to finish it. Four years.

I said, “Well, can you lend me ten dollars?” And he said, “Well, I only got five.” They said, “Oh, we’ll take your five and you’ll owe us five,” see. “Well, okay.” “Your dues is fifty cents a month,” they said. “Okay.” All right, fine. I’m a union member now. So, go right down the hall – it was right down the street from the – I’m in the union now. Oh, boy. I came home – they gave me a button. You have a button on the side of your hat, you know. On my tool box. I used to – I built myself a tool box – you got to get your tools, you know, that’s the next thing you got to get. A nice set of tools. I made my own plane. I made my plane with – made my plane, made all my bevels and all my different planes. I made all my – that stuff in that box. When I got a paycheck, I went down and bought myself a Russell Jennings drill. And I got a brace and I got all my – and I had some tools already like that. To welcome me, they give me a [unintelligible] and different things like that. Well, I had a good tool box.

And I set there and I got into the union pretty near that way and they gave me a little button to put on the side your hat. And Lovejoy was their business agent and he was a stinker if there ever was. And they finally got him. They got him in the end. They rolled a load of lumber on top of him and killed him down at Moore's West Yard. He was giving everybody a hard time and he had fights with all the different men, you know. He got after me one time. There was a lay-off in the shipyard and I went off and went to work someplace else. Came back and – at Cryer's – I didn't go through the hall, I went back – went to work, and he came and caught me on the job and then sent me down to the hall. Fined me for going back. And I went in and they said, "Oh, Red, go on back. Never pay any attention to Lovejoy. All we want to know where you're at. We know you're a good mechanic and we want to keep you." I had a good record, you know. I could put a plank in the side of the ship, you know, and put a door – I could caulk. I learned to caulk. This old fellow taught me how to caulk, so I – then luckily – plank in – the boatman wanted to caulk it, and wanted to call down to the union hall and get a caulker to come out, get the plank, caulk that much wood. So I caulked it, you know. I always did – anybody I worked for, I always met them halfway. I mean I never – I never tried to holler for more money. I'd always say I'll do the best I can for you.

I went to work for old man Stone. Had a wife – worked for Cryer who had a – went to work for Stone – Stone Boat Works – oh, I – that was how I got to know all these different guys. Stone Boat Works was right next to Cryer –

HS: Okay, we're running out of tape. I've got to put a new thing in, okay.

RA: We're going to wear all your tapes out.

HS: That's okay, you can do that.

**[End of Tape 1 – Side 2 (B) Part 2 of 10]
[Begin Tape 2 – Side 3 (A) Part 3 of 10]**

HS: We are now going to be beginning Side 3 with Red Alexander.

So you worked for Cryer –

RA: Yeah, I worked for Cryer. And Stone was on the other side, you know. It was in the middle of the railroad tracks, there in between. You walked on railroad tracks a little ways and there was one company that – Stone's Boat Works – and then there was Taylor Mill – big Taylor Mill is still there. Boat Works is long gone now, though.

But anyway Stone moved to Alameda, before the war. He would mostly build all yachts,

Stone did, only worked on yachts. Cryer only worked on tugboats and fish boats and coast guard cutters. We only use the copper brown paint. Stone used what they call triple-C. It was much more – ‘cause the boats – the yachts stay in the water maybe for a whole year. The fish boats and tugboats they pull out maybe a couple three, four times a year. Something got banged up or something, you know. Once in a while they would call for triple-C paint on the boats. Well, we didn’t have any so they’d say, “Bob, go over to Stone’s and borrow a can of paint.” So I’d go over there. And a fellow by the name of Jack Earhart was working over there and he – he was an apprentice over there the same as I was an apprentice at Cryer’s. He was an apprentice over at Stone’s at that time. Little Tom would say, “What are you doing over there?” I say, “I came over to borrow a can of paint.” “Well, what are you doing over there?” And I’d say, “Well, we just finished up a job.” Well, he said, “We got a lot of work here.” He says, I’ll take the can of paint back to Bill and you” – ‘cause they knew one another real well – “and you stay here and help Jack for a couple of days.” “Okay, fine.” So I – Jack and I would talk boats, you know, together. We’d be over at the side of the ship sanding or painting or puttying seams, whatever we was doing, you know.

But anyway, I doubled-up for a week. That was back in the days when I was a kid apprentice – I’m talking about – I’m going back now to – this is back in the 30s, middle 30’s, ‘36, ‘37, somewhere back in there, you know. And I think – Friday night would come along and make out the checks of pay – “How much did Bill pay you?” And I said, “four dollars a day.” That would be twenty dollars a month. Okay. And he’d pay me, see – no crying act on how much they’d pay me ‘cause – now I got a raise, see.

HS: Right.

RA: The only way you get a raise out of them damn people, you know. But anyway, about three weeks more weeks, here comes Cryer over there to see Stone. And they say, “I want Bob back.” They got another job for me. “I’m not going back with you. I got a job here. He pays me more money.” “Oh, come on, I’ll pay you the same money, see. How much is he paying you?” “He’s paying four dollars a day.” I got a raise, see.

HS: That’s great.

RA: That’s the only way I’d get a raise over the years.

HS: I understand that.

RA: The union was supposed to make ‘em do it. Rather me go down and raise hell with the union and I raised hell with the company.

HS: I tell you what, Red. I got a – I want to go back – backwards. Do you want to – thank you for the sandwich. Do you want to eat your sandwich –

RA: You ate yours already?

HS: It was wonderful. I inhaled it.

RA: [Unintelligible]

HS: It was great, right.

RA: I chew my food.

HS: [Laughing] I know. I see. You – let me turn the machine off so you can have your sandwich.

[Brief interruption in the interview.]

HS: It would seem to me from what you're saying that at the time that you got your first, that first job you're talking about, you were still in high school.

RA: About that, yeah. In and out, back and forth.

HS: In and out and back and forth.

RA: I was taking long vacations – two months' vacation back in the shipyards. Christmastime I was back in the shipyard. Summer vacation I was back. Easter vacation I was in the ship yards.

HS: Okay. So you graduate from high school January – essentially it's January 1934. And then what – what do you do at that point? Do you go to work? Are you working full-time?

RA: Oh, the war started to come on now.

HS: No, '34. This is '34.

RA: '34, yeah. Oh, I was back in the shipyards – post yard work.

HS: Okay.

RA: New union took over. New union came in.

HS: A new union came in?

RA: They started up again, yeah.

HS: This is before or after the big strike?

RA: After the big strike.

HS: After the big strike. Okay. But I wanted to find out what you experienced during the big strike.

RA: Well –

HS: The ‘34 strike.

RA: I knew how the whole thing was – what caused the whole – all the troubles. See, the – the government – the foreign ships over there – the Dollar Line and all them – they were running – had foreign crews on there. Chinese crews. Dollar Steamships had all foreign crews on there. Well, they got the American naval – mail contract and they had to have an American crew on there now ‘cause they had American – they would carry American mail out to the Orient.

So, the pay was terrible. I mean they didn’t want to pay – the conditions weren’t – they’d been used to that old Chinese gang, you know. Well, they – the longshoremen were having problems. The sailors were having problems. The sailors were fighting with the stevedores, and the stevedores were fighting with the sailors about the booms. You know, who’s to put the booms up, who takes the booms down. Fussing going on all around the waterfront. And finally, they found out that they – longshoremen were – I’m not, I don’t know if you’ve been around longshoremen a lot, but you have to be careful what you say about – these things that get out, you know – but longshoremen, they – they break a lot of stuff, steal a lot of stuff on the ships, you know. I mean, they – if they got hungry and a case of prunes came along – I saw it on the ship myself – they’d bust it to get a profit and then they’d all have prunes. Dump the cans over the back. A lot of food was wasted, you know.

Well, then the fight come along. They wanted more money, they wanted better conditions and stuff like that. And they went on a strike. And then they were really breaking into stuff there, you know. And what they did – the National Guard came along and not saying anything to anybody – talking about nobody – very secretly done – they got all these guys in trucks and they drove down each pier in San Francisco and they jumped off about twenty men on each – onto each pier. On every pier. And the trucks went away and everybody’s what’s going on here, you know. They fixed bayonets and they started – everybody get off the pier. Everybody off. Don’t make a difference if you’re a ship-owner, don’t matter who the hell you were. Off the pier. They didn’t care if you were the president of the Dollar line or old man Dollar himself, off the pier. They went up from about the end of – put a barricade up and everything was closed right off.

And then the bus came with the longshoremen, you know. But the police – the police

started pushing further the back and they got – throwing things around, started beating one another up and starting fights. And somebody got shot over there.

HS: Yeah.

RA: Then come a general strike. Everybody tried to back up the sailors and the longshoremen. Tried to back ‘em so they had – called a general strike. They went out – everything went out. You couldn’t buy gas, you couldn’t buy nothing. There were no streetcars running, no nothing. It lasted three days.

HS: Well, now –

RA: I walked to work one day. I didn’t have no car. I had to walk to work one day to get back to the job.

HS: Were you guys in the boat shops which is – you know, it’s not long shoring, it’s not –

RA: The boat shops worked different. When there was fights in the shipyard and fights in my own 1149, the boat builders still worked. And I’ll tell you why. The big shipyards would go on a strike. They wanted some of the benefits. But the little shipyards like Cryer and Stone and all the little shipyards, they say, leave our men walk – work. We’ll pay you whatever it – we’re not going to fight it. If they get a settlement, we’ll settle with you. Leave our men alone. They got a good job to get out. We’re not fussing with them – okay, you guys –

And I worked for – well, I never worked in the big yard. I worked for Crowley. Crowley would go out on strike. I – but – would come out and say, Red, Cryer wants you down here in the street so I’d go down and work with Cryer or Stone. I’d go to work down there. I never had a day without work.

HS: Well, do you –

RA: And I was a boat builder. Boat builders were separate.

HS: I see. It’s a little different. I understand. Did you see any of the different things that happened during the ‘34 strike itself? During that big – you know, I mean there was a lot of violence on the San Francisco side and so on. Did you see any of that kind of stuff at all?

RA: Well, I saw – I was in San Francisco when I seen the smoke bombs being thrown around, you know, and stuff like that.

HS: You did –

RA: One day I saw that. One day. And I saw, you know, the streetcars stopped working. I was on this side of the Bay.

HS: **Right.**

RA: But I was over in San Francisco one day when it started out. I used to work – there was a colonial – a tug named the Colonial – Boston Waterworks. They called the Boston water – they brought water from Sausalito to San Francisco. Do you know where Marin Ship is now? Where that model is there at the Bay? There was a spring came down the mountain there and Boston Water Company had a big barge with big tanks on it. And the Colonial and a fellow named – Hunter Larry – he was the captain on it. He used to go out and get drunk once in a while, on the weekends. Anyway, he was supposed to take that barge and the tug over to Sausalito, load up with water, and take it to San Francisco for – for the office building.

Well, he come in on Monday morning, he couldn't take the tug over. He go up to Cryer and he said, "Cryer, can I borrow Red for the day? I'll pay him – I'll pay Red whatever you get paid here." And get a day off – get away from the shipyard for a day. And I just wanted to help him on the tugboat, pull it in, get the water, and take the water – San Francisco. It took a day only to do it. We'll leave early in the morning – and the water loaded in fast. They had a good pump in San Francisco. It pumped the water out of the barges – and then we'd leave the barge in San Francisco, bring the tug back and go back the next day, go back the next day and get the tug itself and the barge and bring it back. Well, anyway, you always come back home at night, you know.

Anyway, he was a comical old duck. He looked just like Popeye, you know. Little short guy – nice guy, though. And he would get a little bit lit up on – over the weekend. Didn't happen all the time, but maybe once a month or – then after he got paid, you know, he'd have a party over at his house in Alameda. It's funny, he got another old guy to go with him. Another old fellow to go with him that had been tugboat man in his earlier days. It was a nice trip for me. But I hated that damn tugboat he had. It was a double-ender tug, the stern – like a canoe – but it had a [one-longer] engine in it. It was always – you could count every time it would fire – pump, pump, a big old fly would go around the front, little pistons – little cylinder that would bounce up and down on it, you know. But to start it, you had to put a pin in the flywheel – move the flywheel over to get it to start. Well, that's all right. Push it over, get the pin and push it over. And all at once it would take off with you and bam, over you'd go. You can't get free of the damn thing. That pin would fly out, you know. I had to fix those – fly out, you know. But, dammit, I thought, gee, I'm going to break my arm or get killed or something if that damn flywheel flies around in there, you know. That's all open, you know. No guard rail or nothing. They didn't have no guard rails or nothing years ago. Guys would come in – in the shipyards – that's why the shipyards went out of business. For the simple reason the insurance companies and the safety business made it so damned safe – it was too safe to work there. I worked on one plank up on the side of a ship, stuck on the end of a two-by-four. They had to have

two planks and a handrail after a while, you know. It took – it takes more time to put the station up than it did to do the job sometimes, you know. That's the way it was, you know. I mean, back when we worked in those days, who dreamed about having – getting white lead on your hands. Why, we – we mixed white lead and I'd come home looking like a snowbird sometimes with asbestos all over it. You can't do that today. In them days you'd do it. More guys died in the shipyard from lead poisoning than – other things, you know. Painters would die. They had no masks on, you know. That's all been done away with now. The shipyards went out of business 'cause they can't operate that way.

Crowley – Crowley – the last – when I – I left the shipyard down at Crowley's before I quit in 19 – when did I quit, I quit in 1980 – it was so bad in the shipyards with the government, that if you opened a can of paint and left it opened and they come along and saw a can of paint opened on the dock, you were fined for that. The fumes coming out of that can. They'd been doing it for years. We knocked a boat – on the bottom, we're talking about the water run out of the tug and a little oil came out on the beach, forget it. You couldn't do that anymore. The dry dock. You put the dry docks down, the water rushed in and the water rushed out, took all the dirt and sand out of the docks down in the bay. You can't do that no more. You have to take a picture of the – you can't sand that. You can't have that dust in the air no more. You can't spray no more. You've gotta have – you put on like a wash. You couldn't do nothing anymore. You couldn't have a toilet on the end of the docks. We used to go the bathroom on the end of the doggone – if they catch you doing that, you get fined. Everything was fine, fine, fine, fine the shipyards. They fined 'em right out of business. They can't operate that way. They can't make their money that way.

HS: Yeah.

RA: Safety lines on everything. I'd go up and down the masts on them ships time after time after time. One day when I had a job – the last couple – I had a job up on the radar. And I had a new person, an operations agent, what they call – we call 'em whipping boys 'cause they get fired. Instead of us getting fired, they get fired. They call 'em – coordinators. I think they're coordinators. They supposed to coordinate between the company and us, but they're hired by the company to settle the problems in the yard. Well, they're nothing but a bunch of jokes anyway. They don't know what the hell they're doing and – they get blamed for it – they get fired and we didn't get fired, see. So [laughing] – I had to go up the mast one day and I asked one of my men to go – "I'm afraid to go up there. "And I said, "All right, then, I'll go up myself," see. I do a lot of things – my superintendent down in the yard, he'd say to me, "Red, come with me. I want to take you down to the other end of the yard". So I'd go down to the other end of the yard and I'd say, what do you want me to do down there? He said, I just want to get you away from your men. Let your men do – you're doing the job and they're standing there watching you.

Well, I was going to go up the mast that day and I blew my top. That's one thing that made me mad that made me quit, you know. I was getting so damned mad when we were

working and these new young kids come in and – they went to this maritime school in Vallejo. They sent ‘em to sea and they got seasick. Put ‘em in the shipyard as a coordinator and they tried to tell you what to do, see. You’ve been there fifty years and they’re telling you how to run the yard, see. We got all of these old guys who’ll make the yard – make more money, see. They made all right – they made a lot more money – I’ll tell you – and the guy says, “Where you going?” And I says, “I’m going up with you, I’m going up the mast to take them radar off. The crane was supposed to swing around and pick it up. I’m just taking it off and loosening it up. The crane will take it off.” “Well, where’s your safety belt?” “Safety belt? What do I want a safety belt for?” “You gotta have a safety belt if you go up there.” “Hey,” I said, “listen, guys, I’ve been going up and down this thing for the last thirty years and I never had a safety belt, and I don’t want a safety belt.” “Well, you” he said, “you stay here.”” Oh, hell, I’m not going to stay here. You’re not my boss.” “Oh, yes, I am. I’m the head – the company – blah, blah, blah.”

He come back with a belt with a hook, like what a lineman would wear, I guess, and you put it around yourself here. And I said, “You want me to go up with that thing?” I said, “To hell with it. I’d rather fall,” I said, “than have that” – well, I fell off that mast and break my back. I said, I’d rather go down and be killed and – rather than have a broken back and lay in the hospital for – not being able to walk the rest of my life. And I said, “Either you get out of my way or you get somebody else to do the job.” So there was a – I had this Chinese fellow working he says, “I’ll go up. I’ll put this [unintelligible]” The Chinese, he works with me. He was on another job he heard me fussing with the guy. He said, “I’ll go up for you.” “I don’t want you to take my job for me,” I said, “I’m the boss here. I’ll take the job and go up the mast.”

I had another guy, same way. He’d come in – and he wanted to – he’d come to work – he was German. He was a good mechanic. He’d been a stage rigger over at Todd’s in Alameda. And I sent him up on the – to do a job he couldn’t do any burn. He had to saw both off by hand ‘cause they didn’t want to burn ‘em off up there because they had [unintelligible]. So I sent him up. And he sawed all the bolts off. But he left one bolt, he didn’t saw off. He forgot about it. So the next morning he was in my shop and I knew he was mad about something. And he told me later he got a ticket down the street for parking the car and also Todd had called for him that night and wanted him to come back to work over there. The night shift – you get more money on the night shift. So my superintendent comes in and said, “Red, one bolt was left off up there. You didn’t saw it off.” He said, “Get your high man – either you or your high man to take it off.” I said, “He’s my high man. Now you go and cut – you’re going to cut that other bolt off.” “High man, low man, damn!” He starts jumping all over me about it, you know, and said, “I’m not going up there. To hell with you. Go cut your own damn bolt off.” I says, “Hey, don’t talk to me like that.” I said, “I’m the boss here”. And he says, “Well, damn it, I don’t want to.” And I said, “You don’t like it, go!” So he’d only been with me about three weeks or so. So, yeah, he went over and got his check and go.

Don’t pay any attention to him. He got off of a job last night over at Todd. He wanted to

get fired. You didn't do any other way to him. He'd wanted – if he had been decent about it, he would have come up and said, hey, I got a job over there. I'm going to leave you and go over to the job. He just – get into a fight with you and you fire him and that way he got fired, he didn't leave this job, see. That's what he was trying to do. And he – he got a ticket down the street last night. He was mad about that too. That's the way things went along in the yard. But I made up my mind then, I said, hey – these younger guys, coming in here now, they think they know everything – you know, and they know nothing.

Then the thing that happened with the old man. The old man that owned the company, Crowley, his kid was coming in there and going to start showing us how we could do things. Told the old man how he could do things better. He did it all right. He lost the whole damn thing. The shipyard is gone, everything is gone.

HS: Yeah, I know. I know.

RA: Everything's gone.

HS: I know. I know. I wanted to go back to the story which is also around 1934, when you were seventeen or something like that – you were sailing in the bay on a boat that you had made and the boat went over and you were three hours in the –

RA: Yeah, the Coast Guard picked it up.

HS: What – now how –

RA: The sail was my buddy. The sail saved me. I mean, we kept going around the Berkeley Pier – backwards. I was coming in Berkley– was out in the Bay with my uncle and another boy was with me –

HS: Had you guys built this boat?

RA: Yeah, I built it myself in the backyard. My uncle had helped me a little bit.

HS: How big a boat was it? Was it a sailing boat?

RA: Yeah, a sailboat. About eighteen foot.

HS: I see. Okay.

RA: Day sailor. Just like – was a – a new boat come out. And the one part about it was the center board was too low in the boat. They both – the centerboard should have came through the deck, so we couldn't bail the boat out. It was flooding through the centerboard well. It had a rod that – there was no way of stuffing things down and

nothing to keep water from coming through there.

Anyway, we went out for a wonderful sail that day on the bay. And we was coming back home and it always slows up around the Berkeley Pier. The old Berkeley Pier was a way out there in them days. It was half a ways back in the – ‘30 – ‘37, ‘38, somewhere back in there.

HS: I see.

RA: ‘38, I think it was. And we were coming around the pier and I say, we got – we’ve got to get the sail on the other side ‘cause we’re heading for Richmond – we got to get – we’re heading down – we go down and we’re going to go toward the wind. And you can’t have the sail in the middle. The sail’s got to be on one side or the other. And I wanted it on that side. So we went to go – turn the sail over to the other side and I don’t know what reason, we hit a wave and all at once we went over backwards. The boat fluttered and we hung onto the boat for – and I was getting pretty cold. I mean, it happened at two o’clock and now it’s around – I think four or – starting to get dusky out there and cold and dark.

And – well, people on the Berkeley Pier saw it happen and they went down and told – told the yacht harbor. And the person – the rescue boat was up on dry dock at the time – it would happen to be – and they called the Coast Guard. And the Coast Guard – they told the Coast Guard by Alcatraz Island. Well, they went out to Alcatraz Island looking for us and they were coming back home around Treasure Island coming back home and they saw a bunch of seagulls – a bunch of seagulls started flying over the top of us. Oh, oh, there must have been sixty or seventy or eighty of ‘em flying over the top of us. So they – the Coast Guard guys – let’s see what them seagulls are after over there. So they come a little closer over and they saw my sail bob up out of the water, you know, the tiller – on the mast – so they went on and picked us up.

And I was pretty well – pretty cold. I mean, I was just about – I wouldn’t have lasted much more than another – another hour I would have been gone, I think. I was turning blue and getting numb and everything else. And they got me on the Coast Guard boat, set me down and such. And once I got inside and got warm I was – “Hey, where’s my boat? I want to get my boat,” you know. “Well, we left your boat there,” you know. My boat went up on Brooks Island. All of the pieces up on Brooks Island.

HS: Did you always like seagulls after that, I guess?

RA: Hum?

HS: You always had – you had fond feelings for seagulls after that?

RA: Oh, yeah. Them my buddies, yeah. I got one on top of my house out there. Yeah, I got one in there. Yeah, the seagulls are my buddies. They saved my life. I always took pity

on them, you know. They had them big – them big barges come in, dump barges, you know. We had them barges into work and they got caked on the bottom, there's water down in there and they put the mud in there, you know, and then they take out things and open the gate and dump the mud out to sea. Well, the gate was closed when they put into dry dock – in the shipyard had closed and there's water in there, about that much water. And little fish get in there, you know. And the seagulls, see, they dive down to get 'em and then they can't get out. They can't get the lift to get out. So I come to work in the morning and here there's two or three seagulls down there trying to – plopping around – trying to beat the – out of one of them – I take a ladder or a plank and put it – mostly a ladder. They like a ladder better – put a ladder down and they hop up the ladder and fly off. I say, go ahead, I'm paying you back for what you did for me, you know.

HS: That's great.

RA: It's still early –

HS: Yeah, well, we're doing good. We're doing good.

RA: I'll be hoarse by the time we get done –

HS: Oh, let's hope not.

Did you work on square – on sailing vessels and barges and sloops in the Sacramento River at one point? In this period of time?

RA: Not up there, no.

HS: Doesn't ring a bell?

RA: On boats that came down from up there. Tugboats and stuff that – we used to run the beef barges up there, you know. We had a bunch of wooden barges, they all went to Mexico. Sent 'em all down to Mexico – they lost the contract. Crowley had a contract on all the sugar beet barges, and we had a lot of barges that were built during the war – wooden barges. And we'd take – we had bins on 'em. And they'd take 'em up the river. We went up there – and I don't where – they load sugar beets on 'em and they'd bring 'em down – there's this Holly Sugar Company down in Union City. Well, they want – they promised Crowley they were going to dig a trench right up to that – there's a creek that goes up Miles Canyon. There's a river – part of a river goes up through there. They were going to deepen that for him so that his barges could go right up to the gate. What he had to do, he brought his – the sugar beets would come in – they'd bring 'em down the river and they'd bring 'em up to – some place in Oakland, I guess, 23rd Avenue or someplace around there, and then they'd load 'em on to a truck and take 'em down to the sugar beet people – transportation.

So we used to do all them sugar beets –

HS: Was that the 50s? The 1950s?

RA: Yeah, that was all during the 50s and 60s – well, yeah, the 50s. It was all during the 50s. We sold all them barges to – they sold ‘em down to Mexico. They took ‘em down there – see, we lost the contract. The railroad – the railroad come out and said, hey, we can put bins on the side of our – now I think they take a whole box car – they take the roof off the box cars and they load up the sugar beets into that and then they dump ‘em out to the bottom – ‘cause we lost the contract to the sugar beet people then – so the – and all them barges – I don’t know how many barges we had – we had twenty or thirty of them.

HS: I see. Well –

RA: No, we fixed ‘em up, painted ‘em all, and they sent ‘em down to Mexico. They took ‘em off the – they take cotton out to the ship and the ship would take the cotton – the ships can’t get into a lot of the Mexican ports. The ships can’t get into ‘em. They’re not deep enough, so them barges can go into the shallow. They load ‘em with cotton and take ‘em out to the – and cattle, too.

HS: Well now who did you work for in the – in the 1930s before you went into the military?

RA: I was with Cryer –

HS: You were with Cryer all the way through –

RA: From that time on, yeah. I was with Cryer all during the – I worked with Cryer from ‘34 on. And Stone. And Cryer. Both – Cryer and Stone, both together.

HS: Now when you say Cryer, do you mean Crowley or Cryer?

RA: No, I meant Cryer. I went to Crowley later.

HS: Later. Okay, so it’s Cryer.

RA: In 1950 I went to Crowley.

HS: That’s what I thought, yeah. Okay.

RA: I went to – I went to Cryer. I worked with the grandpa that passed away and then the son took the business over. This was his son. His grandsons – or his son was in the service – went into the service, went into the Air Corp and was a B-17 pilot during the war. They were in high school when I went there. They were all in high school when I went there.

They was a lot younger than I was. Anyway, I worked there. And in the '40s – '39, things started getting busy. The Coast Guard – they see that war's coming, you know, they can see it coming. So the Coast Guard had a bunch of boats, old boats from the 20s – back in the 20s. They had come from World War I, cutters and stuff they had. And they had taken over some old rum runners – most of them taken away from the rum runners, you know, back in the days – the boat builders and the Coast Guard were in competition to one another. They'd build a boat and do much speed and the Coast Guard would build one faster than that. Then the rum runners would build one that would beat the Coast Guard boats. And they would have a fight back and forth. We had a lot of fun there. We had a boat there – a beautiful boat – that was owned by a lettuce king. And he was running booze up and down the Coast. Besides being a lettuce – he was the lettuce king, he was running booze up and down the Coast. And they knew he was doing it but they had to get him. So every time they'd catch him, kind of corner him, he'd head out to sea and then dump the stuff at sea, and then they'd come in and there wasn't nothing – what could they do to him? Nothing.

So one day they – they got him cornered one day in the fog out there, and they had – off from the bow of the ship they had a one-pounder shell on there, and they fired across his bow but they didn't go across the bow. It went into a pilot house and killed a guy at the wheel and went through the ship and sunk it. The boat went down – it was a beautiful – it was called The Colonel. Oh, I thought – I helped to put an engine in that boat. It was a beautiful job because the engine had to be taken apart. They'd taken it out piece by piece and the new engine had to be put in piece by piece so the cabinets were all so beautifully built, you couldn't get the big engine in around it, see. You get down into the engine room. So you had to – it was a beautiful job. And we worked on that thing for months. Get that old engine out of there and get the new engine in.

But anyway, he sued the Coast Guard for the boat and everything. They had to pay him. They sunk his boat and they had no proof – it went down. The whiskey and everything went down. They couldn't prove a thing on him.

HS: Red, let me turn this thing over. This is the end of Side 3.

**[End of Tape 2 – Side 3 (A) Part 3 of 10]
[Begin Tape 2 – Side 4 (B) Part 4 of 10]**

HS: Okay.

RA: I – let's see where I –

HS: Well, this is where they – where they sunk the lettuce king's vessel.

RA: Oh, that was just another story. Don't even put that in any of your papers.

HS: Okay.

RA: That's something that – that's Coast Guard history stuff there.

I was saying that's just something – I worked on his boat.

HS: Worked on the vessel –

RA: When the Coast Guard, 1938 –

HS: What was the lettuce king's name, by the way?

RA: Hum?

HS: What was the lettuce king's name?

RA: Oh, I don't remember.

HS: Okay. So 1938, '39 they begin to – you see –

RA: He'd be dead now and gone anyway.

HS: Right.

RA: He was an old man – he was a man of fifty then, so fifty years – a hundred years old. All the stuff I'm telling you, a lot of is old, is ancient history now, you know.

Anyway, the Coast Guard, they knew the war was coming on. The war was in Europe already now. They know we're going to get into it, so they get all their boats fixed up. So they bring their boats in and put 'em up on the – sidetracking 'em. What they call "sidetracking." Bring 'em up on the dry dock and then we put a roller out and roll 'em over sideways where we can lay on it and work. And they took all the planks off. Put all new planks on 'em. New bulkheads – just jack up the deck and the housing and build a whole new boat underneath it, you know. Take the engines out, overhaul the engines and then we put 'em all back in. We did a lot of that work during the – '38, '39 and '40. The '40s got real – real good – a lot of work in the 40's, repairing and building new boats for the –

HS: What kind of boats?

RA: Oh, runners, Coast Guard cutters. Most of 'em were repaired. Had a boat from Alcatraz Island over there. The Old McDonald. We built that whole thing. I did the most beautiful

job on her. My boss was asked to Washington – from Cryer, he went back to Washington to see about building some big boats for the navy. And all the shipyard boat builders were called in 1940, '40 – '41. When did Pearl Harbor come out – '41?

HS: December '41.

RA: December – well, this was in October 'cause that's when Warden Johnson came over and we put all new benches on it, new sashes in the windows. They had wooden windows on it. The clock had a rebuild. Painted – all new beautiful work. New canvas on the deck. Had it all done just prior – before Pearl Harbor. And I was so proud of that boat. They were going to come pick it up Monday morning and take it over, back to the island, you know. We had a boat – we furnished a boat for them to take the passengers back and forth – then and Alcatraz was a military prison then. It wasn't a federal 'cause it was a military prison then.

And I'll be damned, we got word Monday morning going to work to paint the whole boat black. All that varnish work and all that stuff, paint everything black. We had to get out big cans of black paint and – just take a broom and just paint the whole damn boat black.

HS: Why did they want it black? The blackouts?

RA: For the blackouts – no matter where the hell the boat is, the government says all boats will be painted black. We painted all the boats black. If it's only on Lake Merritt you paint it black. That's the way the government worked. They don't say the Alcatraz boat don't have to be painted, this one doesn't have to be painted, but *all* boats be painted black. All government boats be painted black. Or gray or –

HS: Right.

RA: Well, anyway, that took care of up to the war. Then I went in the service.

HS: Before you go in the service, was there a time in – during the Depression that you picked bodies up at one time?

RA: Oh, that was – that was – I told that as a joke in San Francisco. I didn't pick the bodies up. The old – the ones over in San Francisco now, the – the – used to bring lumber into San Francisco and Oakland. A lot of people during the Depression committed suicide. Oh, you can't imagine how people commit suicide during the Depression. Another depression this year, you'll see some horrible things happen. People jumped out of buildings. I had a girl I knew that went to school during the Depression, and she jumped out of the building on Franklin Street – no, not on Franklin – Broadway and 14th, that big, tall bank building there – she killed a man. She landed on top of a man and killed him. He had a family. Didn't think of, you know, you're going to kill – hurt somebody else down below. She got despondent because she was dancing on her toes and she – I

don't know something happened and she got all unstrung – she didn't have a man and her folks were gone and she went up the building and jumped out.

And there was people all over – I mean, not – some of 'em jumped overboard. In the Bay, you couldn't help but see somebody floating in the Bay once in a while. Guys on the pier, they were kind of a comical bunch of guys, on the old – steam schooner operators, you know. They – if they found a body, they'd fish it out of the water and take it to San Francisco and turn it in over there because they got ten dollars over here, and only got five dollars over here. Oakland's paying five dollars and San Francisco was paying ten dollars for a body. So they'd pull a body out and they'd say, hey, we just found a body between the piers. And San Francisco, they'd take it. Take the body and give 'em ten dollars. How did they know? The guy probably lived in Oakland, but he floats – the San Francisco Bay floated him over there. They – the body stays in the water one week. Now that fellow that jumped off the guard on that boat there, that was – they haven't found the other guy yet. They found him yesterday. He came up finally. Now the other guy will come up eventually somewhere, but he might not never come up. If he got – if his body got hurt or a fish bit him or something, an opening in his system, the gas goes out, then he'll stay down on the bottom and he'll never come up. But some of them, the clothes hold – when I say their clothes, they swell up so bad, and the buttons will pop off of, they'll tear the buttons right off their jackets.

HS: Yeah –

RA: When I put the dry dock down – later on, when I got to be in charge of the dry dock at Martinolli's, the big dry dock, when I set the big dry dock down, the water rushes in, it takes everything in with it when it comes, you know, pieces of wood, tires, things that are in the water. And then sometimes a body would come in. I see bodies come in there with fish – you know the plates they put alongside to hold the railroad tracks together? I seen bodies with three or four of them wrapped around them. And the bodies would – bring 'em right in. The gas in the body.

HS: Yes. Did – come back to this. In this period of time before the war, before World War II, did – did you drive pile? Were you doing any pile driving?

RA: No, not much. Well, not much. A little bit. Down at Cryer's I did some driving – Cryer – yeah, at Cryer I did it. Oh, yeah. Built a launching wave. I helped build a launching wave under the ship. We did that – they didn't bother little boat shops. They didn't bother us.

HS: Local 34 didn't say – come in and say that's our jurisdiction.

RA: No, no, they didn't bother little boat shops, no.

HS: Okay.

RA: They only bothered big shipyards. And they were so busy during the war and such, they didn't bother us.

HS: How did they – how did you – can you describe how you put piles in at that time?

RA: Well, I –

HS: What kind of gear did you use, you know, you – did you have a –

RA: Well, like Pacific Dry Docks, you had to have a – the tugboat probably broke the pile off at the end of the – tugboat – they put a rope around it, it went off the – pulled the pile out and get the rope off and swing – and there's a pile pulled out of the dock. Well, we had to have another one back into place 'cause we'd have to have piles up to keep the boat from going under the dock, you know. They're what they call finger piling. The docks don't sit on them. They just go down beside the dock just for ships to lay against, you know. So they don't have to be all the way down in the bedrock. So my company was buying these six piles about forty feet long. The water's thirty feet deep and there's about thirty feet of mud down below, so there's sixty feet. Well, they had a forty-foot pile. I'd get a hold of a crane operator. Put a either a – or put a lashing on it, you know, to hold it – the crane would pick it up and hold it up in the air – the crane operator would hold it up in the air and then I'd take a fire hose – it has a nozzle down – pointed down below. Wrap around put a hook knot in it – the rope, untie it, and go up the pile – he'd put the pile right down where I want it, alongside the pier. Right on down with it. And then he usually got it down – and it didn't want to go any further by itself – it was quite a ways down in the mud by itself, the weight of the pile, then I'd turn on the fire hose and, boy, you see that pile disappear. Go right on down, you know. Hey, turn the hose off quick. Hold the crane, hold the crane. Then wait a few minutes for the mud to come to settle around a little bit and I give the rope a pull and up went my fire hose from the water –

HS: Right, the nozzle would be straight down.

RA: – at the end of the pile – that was at the end of the pile –

HS: So you didn't, then, use a big pile driving rig to do this – this was your own invention, in a sense? So you didn't need one of these big pile driving rigs where they hammer and the whole fancy business?

RA: At the end we – we found some places that the pile wouldn't go down far enough and had to drive a little harder, we had a big pipe and they put a piece of pipe over the end and the crane would let it bounce up and down, push it down a little bit more. But you had to get it out, too, you know.

HS: All right. Okay.

RA: Oh, we did a lot – I did a lot of that.

HS: There was some – but you did – okay, come back – you mentioned that at some time there was – you went to Alaska at one point. When did you go – ?

RA: I never went to Alaska.

HS: You didn't go to Alaska. Okay.

RA: I wonder where you got that at.

HS: I heard you give this speech at San Francisco State about 18 months ago and I took notes on the speech you gave.

RA: Oh, at San Francisco?

HS: Yeah. Maybe I got that one wrong.

RA: There was a company that went to Alaska – we worked hard – when – when they put that – what was that 1950 – '53 – I'd say anywhere from '55, '56', '57, somewhere in there, we probably would send a lot of stuff north.

HS: I see.

RA: To Alaska. Put that pipeline in. Also to put the – that radar circle around up there. They took gas up and oil up there, and we worked night and day loading barges, sending 'em up to Alaska, you know. That's what I –

HS: Maybe so. There was some jurisdictional problem, at that time, between pile drivers and the longshore, did I get that –

RA: No, no –

HS: – that's off the beam.

RA: – no, nothing.

HS: Okay. How about World War II then? You – World War II comes along and you ended up in the – in the Air Corp.

RA: I was in the – working for Cryer at that time, and his boy was already in the service over there. His boy. And they built four boats for the Navy, and I had charge of the repair yard and then the dry dock. Putting the little boats up on the dry dock. And the old man, he had so much business trying to take care of the Navy and all the other stuff – it was a big

yard – quite big now, had about a hundred and fifty, two hundred men working there – and I had a crew with me on the repair work.

So I got called up, you know, to go. And I went – tried to go in the Navy and the Navy said – I had a bum eye on one side and the Navy said they wouldn't take me. So they said – they give me a six month defer so I – and I told Cryer, I said, I'm liable to get caught up in – when they eventually call me one of these days – my girlfriend I was going with from Berkeley, her father came in and wanted me to go on the merchant ship. And I thought I'd go with him on the Liberty ship going to Australia – on the Liberty ship. It was a year going and coming back. I mean, they almost – whatever they were doing. Well, I had a note from the draft board that I was going to go, so I told – I said, no, you're not going, you're going to go in the service. They want you in the service. So they – I'm going to go anyway. It's all the war effort. No, that's not the war effort – for us. Them guys that served on the merchant ships, they all got drafted after they come back, you know. Most all – all of 'em got drafted. They were young guys. They got drafted into the Army or the Navy after they come back from going on them – going through dangerous waters.

I had one fellow worked with me in the service, he got torpedoed seven times on an oil tanker and the last time he got torpedoed, he was in the engine room – six times he was in his bunk and he says I'd get out and get in a lifeboat and get off the ship. The last time they were torpedoed, he was in the engine room and the – the steam pipes burned him all the way – lost his ear and burned one side. They grabbed him and put him in the Army. And he was mad as a wet hen. He said, how many – I want – I could be back out and making money out there as a merchant seaman, and I'm in here with you guys, fifty dollars a month, you know. So I – go up in rank a little more, you know, you grow up.

But anyway, I wanted to go in the Navy and they said, no, they wouldn't let me. So then they finally – six months later they called me and I had to go. And I told the old man and I said, I gotta go. And he was mad as a wet hen. He went down the draft board and raised hell with them. He said who am I going to – run the dry dock then? Well, get a girl to run it. I can't get a girl to run a dry dock down – put a woman on dry dock. They said, well, you gotta get somebody else to do it. So I had to go. And I went.

HS: Before we get into your experiences, I did want to ask you at some point, there were a lot of women who worked on shipyards – in the shipyards and so forth, you know, during the war. Were there any in your –

RA: No, none of the boatyards.

HS: None in your boatyards?

RA: No. In the office. They worked in the office. Not out in the yard. As long as I was there, none of 'em in the yard. No, only in the office. There were girls in the office, but none in

the yard. No girls whatsoever. Not in the boat shop.

HS: I see.

RA: The shipyards, yeah, but not in the boat shop.

HS: Okay. So what happens when –?

RA: Maybe – maybe in the big ones like Higgins or Hogans or them big ones back East there might have been girls working in them, I don't know. I know Higgins had a big place in New Orleans, but I don't know – they had girls working there in the boat shop.

HS: But I'm mostly interested in –

RA: I'm talking about the Bay Area.

HS: Yeah, what you saw in the Bay Area.

RA: Yeah, there were no girls working in the boat shop.

HS: Okay. So you go in the Army and you're in – you got somehow in the Army Air Corp. from –

RA: Yeah, when I went over to San Francisco, they said you had your choice to go into, you know, the Navy, Army, or Marines, Coast Guard – you had your choice, put down what you want. So I put down, of course, Navy. And the guy on Treasure – Government Island over there told me, he says, "George Meredith," he says, "when you go over there, tell 'em – call me – I'll be in my office here – and when you go over to San Francisco – '44 – call me and I'll have 'em send you over to me, over – I want you on Government Island with me. To run the carpenter's shop on Government Island. I'll make you a first-class boat builder," you know. First-class carpenter. I said, "Fine." So I went over there and I said – put down for the Navy and the Navy turned me down. They wouldn't take me. So when I got up to the end of the line – they said – I said – the Navy's gonna – "Hey, hold it fellow. Wait a minute," I say. "George Meredith on Government Island wanted me to give – here's his number, give him a call and he'll vouch for me to send me to the Government – Treasure – Island. He's the head man of the Government Island over there on Alameda."

"Okay, fine." So they called him. They were very obliging. He was away on a three-day pass. They said, "We're not fooling around waiting for a three-day pass. You're in the Army fellow. We don't need you in the Navy. We don't want you in the Navy." And I said, "Well, hell," I says, "that doesn't have anything to do with a boat builder." And they says, "Hey, listen fellow," they says to me, "don't argue." We – the Army – the Army fellow says, "We got more boats than the Navy ever thought they had. We got the

military sea transport, we got the engineer tugboats and barges and dredges going up and down the river, we got the amphibious command hit the beaches, all boats.” He said, “We got the field artillery – the closed targets for the field artillery for firing shells at. We got boats all over the place. You’ll be surely put in a boat and we’re going to classify you as a ship’s carpenter. So, are you happy now?” And I said, “Okay. That’s all I really need.”

So I get over there and I’m in the Army now. I get home – 7 days home and I had to go. I get down to Monterey – they send me down to Monterey – get down to Monterey, they turn around and they say – I was only there 2 days, most guys are there a week – I was only there 2 days. I went in on Thursday, and on Saturday night I was back in [unintelligible] headed for St. Louis, Missouri, in the Air Corp. Oh, shoot. What’s a carpenter going to do in the Air Corp. you know? I – tell me I was in the Air Corp. Oh, well. So I go back there to take a training for the Air Corp., you know, basic training. Well, I found out when I got back there – went to St. Louis, there was snow on the ground when I got – I never seen snow before – I seen snow when I was going over the mountains, you know. The first time I ever seen snow. It was the wintertime. Went to Cheyenne, Wyoming, look out the window, and I said, “To hell with places!” There was snow blowing in all directions, you know. The train was cold. I went into Denver, the station at [unintelligible]. Oh, it was cold. I’ve never been that cold in my life. We got to St. Louis, went in there, and finally after – they said, “You heard about the ninety-day wanderers, didn’t you?” And they said – the other guy said, “Yeah, there was about – a hundred – a couple of hundred of ‘em.” “Yeah, you guys are all going to be airborne engineers.” “What do you mean airborne engineers,” I said. “Well, you’re going to be in the glider outfit. You know there’s a special outfit that picked up people.” All these fellows are mechanics, they found out. They’re carpenters, plumbers, painters, bricklayers, all of these guys in this outfit are mechanics of some sort. They work a trade outside. They’re going to be airborne engineers. They’re going to fly you in with a glider and you’ll make new airports for us for the airplanes to land. Some of you are going to be aviation men, some of you are going to be – put up latrines and all this tent stuff. Oh, shoot, what the hell is it now – it’s out on the hillside, so probably carry a cross-cut saw. You don’t carry it with the teeth, you carry it with the teeth outside – you carry it over your shoulder. Stuff that I know already, but they’re going through, telling us like a bunch of green kids, know how to carry an ax and how to saw a board and how to do this and the other.

Anyway – holy smoke, what did I get my – well, I’m in it now. What am I going to do? I can’t get out of there now. So when Saturday night came along and they always finished our – we had – they said, “It took ninety-days to make a soldier – you guys are going to be one in sixty days. They had to shorten it down a little bit,” he said. “We need you real bad.” They shortened it down. You only get sixty days to train ‘em and get ready to go.

Now Saturday night came along – nobody leaves the camp where you are. Everybody stays. Don’t go nowhere ‘cause you can move out any minute, you know. I think we were going to North Carolina someplace. Greensboro, North Carolina, or someplace down in

there. Well, I said – another guy says I’m going over to the PX and get a Coke or something you know. And so we walked over to the PX, which was only about a block from my camp. I’m the one that stepped out of camp. They were looking for me, you know. It would be just my luck, you know. They got – a guy came over and said, “Hey, you want you over there, Red. They’re calling for you – they’re raising hell over there about you.” So I went back over and they said, “Didn’t you get told to stay in camp!” And I said, “Well, I only went across the street.” “Never mind, you were told to stay here,” you know. I said, “Well, shit.” That old sergeant – jumping up and down on me, and I said, “Well, I told him once before to shoot me.” So I – I was doing – you know, the first week I was in the Army, I got a shot – I got a cold. I’d never been in the snow before and I got a cold. And I was miserable. I was sick. I had a fever. I was miserable. I couldn’t stay in step. I was out of step, out of step. They got the Army to get – that – “Kid, you’re out of step. Red, you’re out of step.” So he went out and he stopped the whole outfit. I was up in front then. He said, “You get out of step, you throw the whole outfit out of step.” He said, “Everybody’s got to change and get back in with you.” He says, “What in the hell’s the matter with me – you?” And I says, “Well, you want – see that big oak tree over there? Take me over there and put me against the tree and shoot me and get me out of my misery,” I says. “I won’t put it against you,” I says. He says, “Goddamn man,” he says. He puts his nose against my nose. He says, “Goddamn man, when I get through with you, you’ll wish I had shot you.” And he says to me, “Let me feel you – you’ve got a – you’ve got a fever.” And I said, “Yeah, I’m hot. It’s cold out there and I’m burning up.” And he says, “Okay, I’ll march you back to headquarters.” So I get back to headquarters there and – I had a 104 fever out there, you know. They run me into the hospital. I was only in the hospital that day. The fever came down. It was from that shot they give me –

HS: Oh, yeah. I had a reaction to the Army shot, too –

RA: The Army shot –

HS: It gave me the shakes –

RA: The doctor said it was a reaction to the shot. They let me go –

Well, the same sergeant, he was looking for me that night. He said, “I had more trouble with you than anybody in the place,” he says. He says, “You were told to stay here.” He says, “You’re shipping out.” And I said, “Oh, we’re shipping out?” “No,” he said, “Red’s shipping out by himself. He’s no longer in our outfit.” “Oh, hell, where am I going now?” He says, “I wish I was going where you’re going.” He says, “I wish I could – I’d do anything to get where you’re going. I’d do anything to get where you’re going.” “But where am I going?” He says, “I can’t tell you where you’re going. I’m going to give you a big envelope and don’t you dare open this envelope. It’s sealed, so don’t you open it. We’re going to put you on a train, tonight. Nine o’clock tonight you’ll be on the train, and don’t you get off that – you’ll be on one car on that train, and you stay on that train

until it comes to the end of the line and the conductor tells you that's it – the brakemen or whoever it is, he'll tell you that's – this is the end of the line. And then he says, you'll turn yourself into an MP at the end of that line." He says, "They'll be waiting for you." I said, "Well, where the hell am I going now?"

I get on the train with all my gear. They gave me a K-ration box, my overcoat – and I put my overcoat down on the – just a chair car – and the guy was back in the caboose behind me and I had two freight cars ahead of me. And we rode – from St. Louis we rode all night, Saturday night. And Sunday morning we were down someplace – oh, in Tennessee someplace down there – and I know Sunday afternoon we hit Jackson, Mississippi – Jackson, Mississippi.

HS: Were you at Fort Leonard Wood?

RA: Hmm?

HS: Is it Ft. Leonard Wood?

RA: No, this was – just the barracks at St. Louis.

HS: Okay –

RA: Just in the barracks. Then they slowed the train down.

Another fellow got on the train there with me. They put him on the train car with me and he said he heard some rumor that we were going New Orleans. He heard some rumors around that we were going to New Orleans. But it sounded like we were headed south. And I was getting warmer now. I didn't need my overcoat anymore, the car was warming up. It was getting warm, starting to rain. Look out the – got down to – that afternoon – Sunday evening, we rode all Sunday evening, and on Monday morning we – about ten o'clock when I looked out the window, we were on piling, you know, on the water. And I seen colored people living in huts, no windows in 'em, you know, and cooking out in the garden. And I say, "Gee, God, where the hell am I at?" The guy yesterday said "I told you" he said. "We're going down into New Orleans. It's all swampy down there" he says.

So we got into New Orleans and I went in – there were a couple of MP's down in front of the train and I say, "I just came down from St. Louis and I'm supposed to see one of you fellows and turn these envelopes over to you." And the fellow says to me – you know how [unintelligible]. He says, "You know, if I was you," he says, "you see that trashcan over there? Take that envelope and throw it in the trashcan and take off," he says. "They'll never catch you. All your records are in there, you know, all what you did since you've been in the Army." He says, "Take off and go." And I said, "Hell, no." I said, "I don't want to do that." I said, "They catch up with me, I'll be in Leavenworth or someplace. No way. I'll take whatever they dish out to me."

So I was only there about a half an hour or so until a little pick-up truck came along and picked me up. Took me out to the yacht harbors – something yacht club on the end of Canal Street. There was a yacht club out there and they had – boy, I think there was about a dozen men out there, bumping and walking around, doing this and that and one thing or another. And I went into the yacht club and there was a captain sitting behind a desk and – and a corporal had a pipe – I put my envelope down on the table and he said – the corporal, he took the envelope – he happened to be reading the newspaper, sitting there reading the newspaper – and he says – he opened the envelope and he said, “Oh, Captain,” he said, “We got a boat builder here.” “We got a boat builder over here. Wonderful. Come on over and talk to me,” he said, “I’m Captain Purdy, the Purdy Boat Works from Long Island.” He was from Long Island. The captain – he owned a – his post on the Boat Works on Long Island. He was a captain, now, in the Army. He says, “I want to tell you,” he says, “I’m so glad to get you here.” He says “We need some boat builders.” He said, “We got twelve boats coming down from Willard Boat Works in Long Island. They’re coming down here. And we’ve got to take care of them. They’re going to be here for training bases – they’ll be off the post coming here and train ‘em to surround – all the airports in the country are going to have to have had crash boats around ‘em.” There’s a lot of pushing and falling into the water – airplanes would fall into the water so they have to have a crash boat.

“We’re going to train ‘em here. Send the boats out to all the airports like Hamilton Field. Wouldn’t you like to be stationed at Hamilton Field in San Francisco?” He says, “That’s where you’re from.” And I said, “Yeah, oh, I’d love to do that.” “We might be able to send you out there,” you know. “So anyway, you’re going to have – get these boats fixed up for them and then we’ll figure out what we’re going to do later on.” Well, I had a picnic there – it was wonderful. We’d leave the yacht club and go to town every night. Last day pass, never had a – go to work eight hours, got my Sundays off. Gee, what a time I had there. I washed my own clothes and put ‘em on the palm trees – washing. I had a wonderful time there. I was there – about nine months I was stationed there.

And the first job we had was putting – extend all the piles in the yacht harbor. All the piles in the harbor where the boats come over were so high. So our boats had a high deck build. So they’d come over – they’d dig into the side of the boat, so that would send the piles up – six-by-six of ‘em – bolt ‘em to the pile. And they had a drill and everything there. There was two other fellows working with us and we had – they had the timber there for it and everything – and they’d take the saw and throw the saw overboard and say, “Oh, I dropped the saw.” Then they’d dive in the water and they’d never get the saw, you know. Get out of the hot. It was hot down there. Boy, it was hot.

HS: Did you have a pile driving rig?

RA: No, no pile driver – no. They’d float ‘em on the end of – the piles were already there. A little wash – finger washer went out. And the boats were in the middle, they lay up

against them piles, they – you have metal on top of ‘em to keep ‘em from rotting, you know. They’d dig the hell out of the side of a boat if a boat laid against ‘em. Well, we had – many of the piles were – not piles – they were six-by-sixes. They were – I think they were twelve feet; six feet below and six feet above, and they put two bolts in a pile. One guy had to put on the top – one guy had to be in a little – kind of like a little skiff, and we had to hold all – we drilled holes in the timber first, and then we’d skip the top went in first and then drilled the whole thing. We drilled by hand! There’s no electric power there, we drilled it by hand. [Unintelligible]. Worked as hard as we wanted or go as soon as you want. Was out in that hot – damned hot – sun though. Caused a lot of trouble with me.

HS: Yeah, skin damage – yeah.

RA: Uh-hum.

HS: ‘Cause your light-complexioned.

RA: Then I stayed there nine months, and they shipped me out in nine months – they shipped us to Gulfport, Mississippi and Gulf [unintelligible] another 10 months or 11 months in Gulfport, Mississippi. I thought I had found a home there. I had a pier – had a coffee shop right on the pier. Song and dance hall and everything. They had a boat and dry dock there. The Seabee’s help out with them square cans. There was a lot of work there for them people, you know, in the Army. I made corporal. They made me a corporal. And then when I – one Saturday night – another Saturday night I was in the barracks and they told me, “Red, you’re shipping again. You’re shipping out.” “Where am I going now? I don’t want to go to Texas or anyplace. Am I going to California?” “No, you’re not. You’re now going to Greensboro, North Carolina. Overseas.”

I didn’t go. When I went to take another physical before they send you overseas, they said, “Red, you’re the only one in this whole shipment that’s from California. We give you – if we give you five days, can you make it to California and back to Greensboro and – if you pay your own way, we’ll let you go, and say hello – back to your folks, ‘cause you’re going overseas, you know.” And I said, “Yeah, I can make it.” So I took five days. I made it home. I said hello to my mother, took a shower – a bath, and took off the next morning and head for – all the way across the United States again to North Carolina – catch up with my gang.

HS: Were you – did you drive?

RA: No, I took the train.

HS: Took the train, right. Okay.

RA: Had to buy a ticket. Then they reimbursed me. They gave me all the money back for it.

All my food and everything. I ate out of sandwich boxes and everything else, you know. I did – some days I went without no meals, you know.

HS: Red, let's – we're at the end of this tape. Let me –

RA: Are you going to change the tape again?

HS: Yeah, we're going to –

RA: I'm going to go to the bathroom myself.

HS: Right. This is the end of Side 4.

**[End of Tape 2 – Side 4 (B) Part 4 of 10]
[Begin Tape 3 – Side 5 (A) Part 5 of 10]**

HS: Okay. So we're on Side 5.

So you go back – you go back to the East Coast.

RA: Yeah. I went to Boston and went overseas on the Mount Vernon. Used to be the old Washington – Washington line – the United States Line – the Manhattan and the Mount Vernon. I went on the Mount Vernon with the Navy. The Navy had a ship. They shipped – I went overseas with a – I was the Air Corp and there was only about – let's see, I think there was only eleven of us in the Air Corp and the rest was all field artillery. Then they had taken my patch off and said, "Don't tell 'em you're in the Air Corp, don't tell 'em you're in the Air Corp, they'll throw you overboard. Don't tell 'em. You're just part of the field artillery," you know. So, I went over on her –

HS: What year was this?

RA: That was 1943. '43. Yeah, '43. Yeah. Or just before then. Before the invasion. They landed – I was about 12 days at sea, I think. 11 – 11 days at sea. We didn't know where the hell we were out. We left Boston. I remember when we left Boston and – and it was cold, wet and miserable. It was in March when we went over. We left in March. And the water was dirty gray. Everything was running – water on the decks, you know. Dampness on the decks and everything. Nothing but gray water out there and gray skies. Couldn't see very far. I think we must have been off the coast of Iceland or Greenland, up that way somewhere, 'cause it was bitter cold.

And finally things started calming down. The sky started getting a little more bluer, a little more – we saw the sun break one day. The sun popped through a little bit. And –

“There is a sun after all,” one of the guys – I heard one of the guys say. And then pretty soon, some guys come to me one day – a couple of guys with me – they knew – I was talking about ships and stuff on the ship over, you know, 10 days, 11 days out there. And they said, “Hey, we just saw a boat on the other side. It’s got a flag on it. Tell us what kind of flag it is.” You know, I knew flags pretty good. I turned around to take a look at it and, “Hey, that’s an Irish flag. We must be near Ireland somewhere.” You can see the green hills in the back, and the water’s so blue. And we had two British destroyers came alongside of us, one on each side of us. And, yeah, I remember British destroyers and I say, “That’s an Irish ship so we must be somewhere near Ireland somewhere.”

Well, we went all day up to the Irish Sea and we landed in Liverpool the next day. What a mess that was, in Liverpool. We had to go in – they were running all kinds of ships sitting up in the harbor, you know, masts up out of the water, stacks – all you see is the stack and two masts. That’s all you see. The rest was under water, you know.

Then they shipped me from there. I landed there – I was only there a day – shipped me clean across – boy, I don’t know – on three trains. I rode on one train and got off at Manchester, went to Oxford, from Oxford I went to Sheffield – someplace near down Colchester, up on the north, sixty miles north of London. There was a canal that come up in there. And crash boats come up in there. And the water would go – you know, the tide – there’s a 17-foot tides and when the water come – we had – back on the rest of the boat – boat outfit there. I wasn’t on there very long. We never went out. It seemed like we stayed in the harbor all the time and never went out. There was some kind of a fuss with the British about thing – and finally they decided that they – they come in and told me, you have to give up the boats. The British are going to take the boats over. They say – they claim they know the water – they don’t know the water – [unintelligible]. I was still a carpenter and went into an ordinance – ordinance outfit in the Air Corp. I was still in the Air Corp. I was just stationed – sent down to – in Colchester – I was only there – been there three months and they sent me down to Salisbury – all ammunition on the field. And I had a carpenter’s shop and they put me in the carpenter’s shop. And everything was – I was cutting wood and making boxes and all kinds of things – making crates for bombs and stuff like that, you know. Making furniture for the officers. The officers were shipping stuff home and you’d make boxes for ‘em to ship stuff home with, you know.

And it was totally by hand. And I said, “Guys” – and I’m only a corporal, too, just a corporal that was assigned in there – and I said – they had a cut-off saw there – “Why are you cutting with a wood? There’s a saw there, I’ll file it for you. I know how to file.” No,” he says, “it’s sharp.” He says. “It’s a British current. An American saw won’t work on British current. “Well, hell. I’ll go down and talk to the captain.” So I went down – the captain’s a pretty nice guy. He worked – he was a – in the water company – he had [unintelligible] with the outfit, too. But not from the [unintelligible] outfit, he came from another outfit. And I said, “Have we got any money in the contingent fund around this place?” “Yeah,” he said, “we’ve got some money in the contingent fund.” I said, “How about taking that saw we got in the carpenter’s shop and send it out and let them change

the wiring on it.” And I say, “Well, you know, we’ll do a lot more work for you – and hand saw, that’s getting nowhere. The hand saw that’s on board.” “Take the saw off and get the motor off and give it to me and I’ll take it out and have it done. If I have to pay for it myself, I’ll get it done for you.”

It was only gone a day, come back and put the saw on, and, boy, it runs beautiful. Why it will cut – and you know, they had Limey carpenters on the base. And they were – they had – they worked pretty nearly with oak with them people. They saw our saw – and they’re not supposed to use it, you know, they’re supposed to do everything by hand, you know. No power tools, you know. And – “Red, will you?” They called me Ginger, they don’t call me Red. “Hey, Ginger, will you cut this board in half in about three places for me?” “Sure!” And zoom, zoom, you know. “Oh, that’s great.” They were so happy about that, you know. So we had a steady stream of them guys coming over. [Laughing]

Had a lot of fun with one guy. Then the war come to an end. They gave me – had to send the brides home first and so we had to go through the points system – had to go home first. You know, I had points – you got points for every month in the army and two points overseas. Well, a lot of guys had been overseas a lot longer – you know, they get to go home first, naturally. Well, I got – a year after the war was over – the war come to an end and I was there a year after the war. The war ended in May and I didn’t get home until the following April. But I had a hell of a good time. They – they – the captain give me his jeep anytime I wanted to go. I got in good with him on one thing – the one thing – I’ll tell you this before – this one thing.

One Sunday morning we had to get out 11 truckloads – it wasn’t 12, it was 11 – 11 truckloads of ammunition – 50 caliber ammunition. Each truck could carry so many boxes of ammunition, so I guess the war was still going on in Japan. And on Sunday morning – had to get up Sunday morning. Now every Sunday morning three of us went to church. They had a truck for us to take us to church every Sunday morning. Only three of us went out of – there were three or four hundred guys on that base, only three of us went to church. Every Sunday morning we went down to, you know, to the Catholic Church.

Well, here comes Sunday morning, we all have to work. Everybody has to work to get these boxes loaded up, you know. Oh, they all had to go to church. Everybody had to go to church. Well, they said, “Okay, go to church.” We got to get these boxes out by lunchtime. They say, “You guys go to church, get back and get your clothes and get out.” And I said – I say to the captain, I say, “How about if we go out and set the rollers up and get the trucks lined up so when these guys get back, we’re already set up for ‘em. We won’t go to church. We’ll stay home.” “Fine, fellows.” Us three, the three guys that go to church, we said, “Well, the war effort is more – that’s what we’re here for, the war effort.” So he says, “Fine, fine, fine.”

So we went out and set the things up. So while we’re setting there, we start pushing the box down, you know, downhill. The boxes roll down and the truck driver says – one

truck driver says they're not supposed to touch anything – the truck drivers – we're supposed to load the trucks. "Hey, listen. If we pitched in and helped load the trucks could we get out of here before the captain? Can we get out of here a little bit early, you know. If I get a truckload, can I get out of here? And once I load the trucks back to where I'm supposed to, I'm through for the day. I want to go to town and see my girl." See, a lot had girlfriends, you know. "Sure, come on and help us." So we – bang – in no time at all we'd load that truck and he'd go on and back another truck in and we'd start loading that one. We had them boxes come flying out of there. You know, they're about so high, you know. They weigh quite a little bit, but we're young, you know, and we're strong guys. And we got 12 other guys to help us, you know, and three officers. The captain and two lieutenants. And even had our medical doctor, he was out there, and he said, "I need the exercise, let's go," he says. And he started throwing boxes in. Boy, we loaded them trucks like crazy, you know.

Well, the guys got back from church, they had to change their uniform in time for dinner – lunch, so they had to have their lunch before they could come out there. Well, lunchtime we had the boxes – the trucks were all gone. The captain didn't say a word.

The next morning, boy, did he give those guys a razzing next morning. "Yesterday," he says, "I found that I got nothing but a bunch of hypocrites in this outfit," he says. "You're all nothing but a bunch of hypocrites," he says. "I had a job to do, get it done, it was a [unintelligible] job. I could have demanded you out there. You couldn't have done anything to me. I could have had you court martialed, but I didn't do it, but you guys had to go to church, you had to eat, had to change your uniform." He says, "I had three fellows here and my officers and went out there. They go to church every Sunday morning. But they didn't – every Sunday morning they go to church. They helped me – they loaded all the ammunition. The men you saw here now loaded all the ammunition, got it all out." "Now," he says, "I'll probably get nothing, then, for doing it and not – but I'm going to get bawled out for what I did, too. Not making you guys come and do it, see. And I'm going to get bawled out." "But," he says, "I'm going to tell you right now," he says, "you guys are all restricted for one month and you don't leave this base for one month. These three fellows can go anyplace they want. I give 'em my jeep. They can do anything they want, but you guys are going to stay on this base for one month."

And they did. They stayed there for one month. All we heard from 'em was moaning and growling. They went down to see the chaplain on the base and everything. And that was my last – going over there –

HS: Okay –

RA: You don't mind of I listen to [unintelligible], do you?

HS: No, that's okay –

RA: I just want to see what it is.

HS: No problem.

[Brief interruption in the interview.]

RA: 12 days to get over and 17 days to get home. I don't know why.

HS: It took 17 days to get back from England?

RA: Yeah, I came back on a Victory ship. And one day we didn't go nowhere. We went up and down. There was a broken oil pump and –

HS: Let me ask you one thing before we come back, you said that you had – that you enjoyed yourself in England, that you had –

RA: Oh, yeah. Immensely.

HS: What did you – what did you guys do over there that was fun?

RA: Well, when the war ended, as I said, the captain was very impressed with us three guys, what we did, you know –

HS: Yeah, uh-hum –

RA: – and he told me we could have a jeep and go anywhere we wanted, do anything we wanted. And we went around and visited all the castles and all the – I went to the Palladium Theater and make little trips here and there. Went up to Edinburgh and went to Bath, England, and – I had a little joke about Bath. You know, it wasn't getting [unintelligible] here, but there was a little Scotch – a little English – Irish girl and they all wanted a date with her. All wanted to get – she was the prettiest girl. Oh so pretty. I hear the guys talking in the barracks about it, you know, "Gee, why won't you give dates?" She won't give nobody a – she won't even look at anybody. I had always been going in the other direction. My biggest trip was to go to Southampton, get a ferry and go over [unintelligible]. I had some boat builders over there, off the fox – had a boat shop there, and I used to go sailing with him on my days off over there. He has a big – a dinghy man. He has a dinghy – he tries dinghies with last week this way or last week that way, which was the best. I'd go out there with him. I'd put my shoes around my neck and go there. But he'd take me out and meet the ferry. When the ferry would leave, he'd take me out and I'd get on the ferry. And everybody on the ferry – as far they knew, everybody come to see who this crazy Yank is, getting off onto the ferry, you know, go back to Southampton.

Then sometimes I'd go back over Ryde then over to Portsmouth and then from

Portsmouth back to Southampton – I mean back to Salisbury. I'd enjoy myself immensely. See all the cathedrals and all the places – but – in the King's Theater – I got to tell you about the King's Theater at Edinburgh. Anyway, we – what was I leading up to here now?

HS: There was this girl that everybody –

RA: Oh, everybody was with this girl and – a little Irish gal. You should have seen – everybody would go there – when you went into Bath, the guys went there for their liberty run – each town – every soldiers camp had a different town they allow 'em to go to the show and go to town and get away from the camp. But they tried to keep you away from – the English were – guys were being – one night they let us both in Salis – Colchester – that's the red devils and the English and they left the 82nd Born – Air Born division, and all that does – some English guy pushed a gal off the street and some Limey popped him. There was the biggest fight you've ever seen in your life. Well they said from now on, everybody goes to a different town. Well, Bath was picked out for us to go. It's a beautiful town. The Roman bath there, if you've ever been there –

HS: Yeah, Bath. Yes, uh-hum.

RA: It's a beautiful place. But I'd never been there. I always went the other way. So one day I said to a guy, "I want to go to Bristol." Bristol is the next little town over. So – something in Bristol I had to see or do something. I says, "Well, I'll go and ride in with you guys tonight and I'll stay overnight in Bath and go to Bristol on Sunday morning." I had to be there early Sunday morning. Anyway, when you get in to Bath, you go and get your bed right away. You pay fifty cents for a bed – half a crown. If you don't do that, you'll sleep on the floor because they've only got so many beds. So immediately we go up to the counter and get – put fifty cents down. It was raining outside a little bit. So I says to the girl at the counter – an English girl – I says to her, "Where's the Catholic Church in town, you know, I want to go to church tomorrow morning." And she says, "I don't know, I'm not Catholic. But Mary is. Mary, she's Catholic, she'll know. So Mary, this soldier here wants to know where this Catholic Church is in town." "Oh," she says, "Yes," she says, with an Irish accent. She says, "You go down here, turn here, turn there, turn here, turn there." I says, "Hey, hold it, you've got me lost already." I say, "You people are all alike over here." I said, "You ask for somebody to send you here, there, here and there, and it might be just around the corner, but you want me to see your town before I find the place I'm going to!" And she laughed and said, "No," she says, "I'll tell you, we have a habit of doing that but –" she says, "I'll take you to church tomorrow morning." And I says, "Okay, that's fine." All the guys are standing behind me, half a dozen guys, two dozen guys standing behind me, "That guy already, first time he comes to town he's got her already, see."

I says, "Well," I say, "what time will I meet you? What time is the mass?" She says, "Well, they have, you know." She told me. And I said, "Well, I want to go early, seven

o'clock?" "Oh, no," she says, "I won't go before ten." I said, "Oh, no, I can't go then. Just forget it, I'll just let the whole thing go. Never mind. Just forget the whole damn thing." I just turned around and walked away. I said, "I'll just forget about it. I've got to be in Bristol before nine, so."

Dear God, did I get it from them guys when I was back home. Oh, they threw shoes at me, they did everything. "You're crazy – look at this crazy guy, he hasn't got all his marbles. I think maybe he doesn't got nothing down below – oh, he's nuts." He says, "He let that girl get away from him," you know. "And here we've been trying to get her and she won't give us the time and she's taking him to church and she wouldn't go out with-" I spent a long time riding that one down.

HS: [Laughing]

RA: But anyway, I enjoyed myself traveling all over. We went to – one of the biggest jokes in America, you go to St. Paul's Cathedral and stand on top of Nelson's tomb. Nelson is buried under the cathedral in the floor –

HS: Yes.

RA: Well, you go up and stand on top of his tomb, you know. I don't know what – it's just a regal – I did it and you get cocky. You get in trouble, too, you know. But all them crazy things Yanks will do.

I went to the Stonehenge, you know. You know, in school I wanted to see the Stonehenge. I talked about it, read about it, everything I could find out about it, never dreamed that one of these days I would be camped within four blocks of the place. I could go down and see it anytime I wanted to. I only went there about twice, I think, all the time I was there. I carved my initials on one of 'em. I bet if I went back now I wouldn't be able to find my initials, there's so many other initials on it I'd never find mine. I forgot where I put my initials, but – the moss grows out on it, you know. I'd never be able to find it anyway. But that's the way the crazy Yanks are, you know, in them crazy towns.

You know, the Yanks had – in England had the biggest – vulgar, rough, watch out for your daughter, they run off with 'em, you know, and all of these crazy things. The Yanks. I had an uncle in Edinburgh. I took some candy at – my father had a brother. There was – see, there was two girls and two boys in my family but two stayed in Scotland and didn't come 'cause they had good jobs, you know, and they didn't want to leave. One was, I think, a head gardener. My uncle was a head gardener. And the other one was governor for some – nanny or something for some rich family. And they wouldn't leave. And my uncle couldn't work in the gardens but they put him in the shipyard painting. He got paint in the lung, you know, and he was very sick when I went to see him. And he was a crabby old devil, too. And when I went – we used to buy – get a big bag of candy for a

shilling – or florin or shilling – and the guys would pick out what they wanted and throw the rest on the table in the barracks, you know. So there was a pile of it on the table and the rats would come in and want to eat it, you know.

So I – all the kids over there liked to get candy from us and one of the biggest jokes was over there, “Hey, got any gum, Chum?” And that’s was – they’d say, “You got any gum and you’re a chum.” So gum chum. “You got any gum chum?” And so they made cracks about them, you know. So anyway, I took all this candy up and give it to my – they’re supposed to be cousins or distant cousins or whatever they are, you know, what they are. But anyway, I took this big lot of candy, boy, my uncle bawled the hell out of me. He says, “You’re [unintelligible] our kids. You guys come over here and you wreck – you’re making our kids – I wouldn’t come to your country.” Oh, I never went back to see him again. I never went near him.

So, anyway, if my father was anything like him, or my grandfather, no wonder I never saw them or wanted anything to do with them. Boy, what a grumpy old bunch they are. So anyway, we went to the King’s Theater that night, one of the nights that we were in Edinburgh. The Red Cross bought a whole roll of tickets for us. Well, the theaters in London, in England – I mean Scotland – they had to be out before nine o’clock. Get off the street before it gets dark – because of the blackouts and all that sort of thing. So the movie comes to an end, or the play – the King’s Theater is all plays, no movies, it’s all plays – all Scotch plays and making fun of the Irish and making fun of the Americans and everything – but anyway – and the Palladium Theater is the same way – vaudeville, you know. So anyway, they had a – when the movie comes to an end they play a little tune. A little tune comes out. They hear the tune, then they show the king and queen figure on the stage – on the platform, – and you stand up and pledge allegiance to the King – or the national anthem, whatever they do. I mean, like we do – like we was in America. We salute the flag or pledge allegiance to the flag or something like that, see. They do the same thing to the King and Queen.

Well, Harry Gorman, was a great Scotch comedian, and he put on a play that night. The Red Cross got us to go the theater and got us a whole roll of tickets for us to see Harry Gorman, a great Scotch comedian, who was knighted by the King because he was the greatest comedian in England, see. Well, we had a bad reputation to go – anyway – what I was leading up to was when that little music comes on, all the soldiers, they beat it. They get out of that so – they know what is coming and they – but us guys was too dumb to know when that was coming so we’re kind of trapped in there, you know. So here comes a little tune, see. Well, we start looking around to see if we was going to be able to exit out of there, but we’re down in front. We can’t get up and get out of there. We see other guys go – they were beating it out of the back door. What are we going to do?

Too late now. The King’s picture is on the stage. And they – we stand at attention, naturally, like we should be, and then Gorman, he comes out on the stage – he’s dead and gone now, he was an old man then – he has kilts on, you know – a Scotch accent you

wouldn't believe. You could hardly understand what he's talking about. Anyway, he come out and he says – what I could get out of it was that, you know, he says, "I'm sad." I remember him saying that. "I'm very saddened tonight the way our fellow Scotchmen act. All you – my fellow people – English – say how rotten, how low the American Yanks are." And this and that and one thing or another – he went on with some other word – I don't remember all he was saying. I didn't understand half of what he was saying. What I could get out of it was that he was telling how bad they were. And he says, "I want you to look down here," he says, he's got – I think there was about 20 of us – "there you have – the Yanks," he says, "they stood here in the presence of your King and Queen while the rest of you – beat it and run," he says.

"Now," he says. "You still say to them vulgar and uncivilized. It makes me sad – proud to think that – I'm sad of my own men and proud to see that our fellows from over the sea are much better." Well, you know, we got more invites to tea parties and then – everyone leaning back of us and all the taps on the shoulder. Invited us to tea – we got invited to more tea parties – afternoon teas than we can handle, you know. But anyway, I always felt proud of that, you know, I mean that we were the only ones in the show – made us feel real good that night, you know. Everyone going out of this theater, you know, there was guys shaking hands with us and they wanted to know where we're from, you know. And everyone I – everybody ever asked me – every darn Yank or – or every darn Limey – the one that asked, "Where are you from?" I'd say, "California." "Are you anywhere near Hollywood?" They always wanted to know about Hollywood. "No, I'm from San Francisco." "Well, how far is that from Hollywood." "So that's four hundred miles." They all want to know where Hollywood is. "How far are you from Hollywood?" "Are you near Hollywood?" The girls, they'd ask you, they'd say, "Where are you from, Yank?" And I'd say, "I'm from California." "Oh, California, that's where it's Hollywood, in California. How far is – do you live right near it?" And I'd say, "No, I live a long ways from it." "Oh, how far is that?"

Another time I got caught was coming from Ryde. I'd take a bus – what I used to do, I'd get a day off. The bus was all in the town. I don't care what town it is, Colchester, Winchester or any other of them damn towns, all the buses line up in one little bus depot and they go – all branch out all over the country, see. So every time I'd get a day off, I'd go and get on one bus. On the first one, the second one, and I'd say to the girl on the – they all had girls on the bus 'cause the men were all in the army – and I'd say to the girl – the girl would say, "How far do you want to go, Yank?" And I'd say, "Well, how far – how much does it cost to go to the end of the line?" And she'd – I want to know how far – I want to know how far it takes to go to the end of the line. She says, "Well, it's a penny a mile." See, over there, a schilling – two – a shilling and two pence or something like that. Two p's or whatever – I happen to have a crown, or, "Here's two shillings – want to give me the change?" And I said, "Well, I'm going round trip. I'm going to – I'm going to come back." "Well," she said, "forget about coming back and just stay on the bus and come on back." Mostly they would say to me, "Pay one way, then don't get off the bus [unintelligible] – stay – there's nothing at the end of the line," she'd say.

So anyway – I’ve left Ryde on the Isle of Wight coming back over and I’m on these bus trips going out – little kids that were on there wanted to touch you, you know. They touch my hat or – and I’d say, “What are you – what’s the matter? And he’d say, “Oh, I’d like to be able to touch a Yank.” You know, this was the only place that he’d ever see one. He’s out in the countryside, he’d never see a Yank. Well, I come back on the bus – a ferry boat, and you had to get off the ferry boat – with the boat always – come into the pier everybody gets – gets off the ferry. I felt something touch my hand. I had a little boy next to me. And he pulled back real quick. His mother was standing right there. “He wanted to touch a Yank so bad,” she says. I say, “Well, here, I’ll shake hands with you.” “Oh,” she says, “you’ll make the proudest day for him in his life.” You know, he shook hands with a Yank, you know. “Sure,” I say, “here, shake hands with me. Hold on, I – want to know where I’m from?” He says, “Yeah.” And I say, “I’m from California.” And his mother says, “Oh, yeah.” She didn’t ask me where California was or where Hollywood was. She says whereabouts in California and I say, “I’m from San Francisco.” I never say Oakland. I live in Oakland but I say San Francisco. “Oh, yeah,” she says, “He’d love it there. He likes them pictures of them big bridges you have out there. You get across them bridges?” “Oh, yeah, dozens and dozens of times. Go back and forth across ‘em all the time.” Oh, that’s – that was my – over there.

HS: Well, when you came back, you came – to the United States you came back on the Liberty ship?

RA: No, I came back on the Victory ship –

HS: I’m sorry –

RA: Rushville Victory was the name of it. Rushville Victory. It was 17 days. We left Southampton on George Washington’s birthday and 17 days later we got into Staten Island – Long Island. They took us up the river by – we seen the Statue of Liberty and we made a turn and come back and went into Staten Island. They had a band playing for us and they’d throw oranges up on the boat. And then I stayed in New York for two or three days. I got two or three days – went up to see Captain Purdy at Purdy Boat Works. It was beautiful. He built boats from – big – gold doorknobs and everything was gold, not brass. Gold. But anyway, I saw him. And he wanted me to stay there and I said – there was snow on the ground there again, you know – and I say, “Hey, no way, I’m going to California. Get the hell out of here.”

But anyway, I come back off of my – came back, got out of the Army, and came home to my mother. Got home on the night before Easter, on Saturday night. I never saw so much country in all my life. I came into Camp Beale up there in California, what was – Marysville somewhere up there, and I had – soldiers departed and I had a hundred dollars given to me in my pay, and four hundred and some odd dollars in soldier’s vouchers. They gave it all to me then. And some guys wanted to take me – they wanted to know

where I was from and they'd take me to San Francisco on the boat – on the car, and I didn't like the looks of 'em and I'd say, "Naw, naw, I don't want to go to San Francisco. I have to come back across the Bay. I don't even know if I want to go to San Francisco." I got them out.

I went down to – the Greyhound bus was going. The Greyhound bus was the only one that was going to leave until later in the afternoon, so I went down Imperial Bus. It was only a dollar to Oakland. I got a ticket. I got on that bus at one – twelve-thirty. I get out of the Army at twelve o'clock and at twelve-thirty I get on the bus. I didn't get into Oakland until quarter 'til nine that night. I never seen such beautiful country back through here. They went through all that [Piloton?] and Royal Oak and, God, all them little country towns back in there. You know, when you stop and have lunch in some other – Walnut Grove, some place back in there, and then we come back and had dinner with – what's it's – Antioch. By the time I got into Oakland it was nine o'clock and I told the guy, I say, "Hey," I says, "you know, I've been away from home for over three years – four – three or four years I've been away from home." I say, "I lived down on McArthur Boulevard. My mother lives on McArthur Boulevard, just off of Broadway, just by Mosswood Park down there." I say, "Hey," I say, "Let me off on McArthur – on Broadway and 4th Street," and I said, "I'll – I don't want to go downtown to Oakland and then have to transfer out again," you know.

He says, "I'll tell you what I'll do. If I have to stop at one of the signals at Broadway and McArthur Boulevard, I'll open the door and let you out. If I have to go through the signals, you'll have to go on downtown." Just my luck, the – I think he slowed it up and missed the signal and he let me get off there, and I walked down two blocks to my mother's house. My mother was so glad to see me. She wanted me to stay with her, and I said, "No, I don't want to." I don't like the guy she married. I didn't like him, so I didn't want to stay with her. She wanted to get a larger apartment. I said, "No, I don't want to live at home. I want to get out and get on my own. All these years I've been taking care of your mother – I took care of my grandmother," and I says, "I don't want – I want to get on my own. So I – I bummed around for a couple of days and I went back to Cryer Boat Works.

HS: Okay, let me knock it off because we're just at the end.

[End of Tape 3 – Side 5 (A) Part 5 of 10]

[Begin Tape 3 – Side 6 (B) Part 6 of 10]

HS: We're on Side 6.

Okay, so you – you went back to Cryer Boat Works?

RA: Yeah, I went back over to see Cryer. It was a hell of a time – my grandmother passed

away while I was in the service. She passed away in '44. She was pretty near 90 years old. She passed away. They sold the house and got rid of everything I had. They thought I probably wasn't going to come home, I guess, so they got rid of all my clothes and everything I had was gone. So I was in uniform for about several weeks after I come home. I even went back to work 'cause I couldn't get any decent clothes. You know, clothes were hard to get and I was tall and skinny, you know, to get some clothes – go downtown and try to buy a suit. And I said, "Well, here's a brown." I don't want a brown suit. I want a blue suit. I've been in brown for four years, I wanted a blue suit. And they said, "Well, I can't – go back in the army." I said, "To hell with you," you know. The manager insults me, you know, trying to buy clothes.

So I went back – the first – the first couple days I –

[Phone ringing. Brief interruption.]

I went around to see the different boat shops to see – over in Alameda, a new shipyard just opened up over in Alameda and they were building some big what they call tuna boats, you know, for going down catching tuna. And all the gang was over there – some of the gang that – I don't know if – [unintelligible] – I was working. Some other little things came up. Anyway, so I don't know – Cryer don't want me to come to work for him. He was in Alameda now, a big yacht place. And he was such a fussy guy over at – very fussy, fussy, fussy. Every screw had to be turned the same way, you know, and – everything – but he worked on the yacht, you know. And I knew how fussy he was. So I said, "Well." Cryer – I went back to see Cryer and Cryer says, "Oh, we're waiting for your job. It's right here." "Oh, okay." So I went back to Cryer because – and his boy was taking over the yard now. His grandfather worked – his grandfather worked with his son, now the grandson's working the yard. Well, he just arrived just ahead of me – on the 17th. He made twenty-five missions over there. Never got shot down in a B-17, so he got home early 'cause he had all that – points. So he's running the yard now. So he wanted me to come and stay with him, so I said, "Okay." That's – you know –

Well, next I had to get a room. That's why – I went around looking for a room. You ought to see some of the places they wanted to rent to me, in the hallways or something, they would put a partition on the end of a – use the bathroom with five other – families or something. I didn't want none of that, I went through enough of that in four years. I wanted something better.

HS: What did you end up – what rank were you at the end?

RA: Hm?

HS: What rank were you when you got out?

RA: Corporal. Never got any higher. I was glad. A corporal's the best job in the army.

Napoleon says, my little corporal, he didn't – he thought more of his corporals than he did any of his generals, you know. They was the backbone – even Washington said generals – the corporals are the backbone of his army, you know.

So, anyway, I was in there and my boss's son had gotten married and he lived up – up on – up off of Parks Boulevard in Oakland, and her father had passed away. He had been an army man, but he'd been retired from the army and he had a stroke and he died. And her mother was there. Her mother had this Palsy's shake. And she was a woman up in her late seventies or eighties, I guess. Well, my boss had left her – she had another sister at home and her name was – Brit was her name. So his – my boss's wife come to me – I hear you're looking for apart – a room, an apartment. She says, we understand that you were very good in taking care of your grandmother, one of the fellows at work said that you always came home and took care of your grandmother at home. Would you mind – we'll rent my room to you if you'll kind of halfway look after my mother, you know. "Yeah, how much." And she says, "Well, we'll rent the room for thirty dollars to you for a month." "Well, fine." You go up and see my mother and – she was an Irish woman, too, from Ireland. You know, she was from Ireland, too.

So I went up to see her and [unintelligible] to my grandma when she had the shakes. So I said, "Yeah," I said. The room was a beautiful room. It looked right over the Diamond Park, you know. It was a beautiful room. Beautiful bed and everything, you know, for only thirty dollars. Fine. So I said, I was – they were glad to have me. Well, I said, the only trouble is I have to find someplace now to get a breakfast and a lunch. Well, she says, throw an extra ten dollars for breakfast and ten dollars for lunch, we'll get all the meat and stuff and you'll have kitchen privileges – 'cause they go to the market, they'd buy all the stuff for me – so fifty dollars for room and the – wonderful deal! So I rented the room. Every night I'd come home – after work I'd go upstairs and take – on Tuesday nights I'd go to my mother's and have dinner with my mother. Take my laundry over to her and she'd do my laundry for me. And then I'd go – Sunday I'd take them to dinner, on Sunday, to pay 'em back for – you know, take my mother and her husband to dinner down to the Colonial or some restaurant downtown.

Well, I was very happy there, you know. I had a nice room and I built quite a few models there. I made an Admiral's table – I made a desk for her. Built a desk out of some – bring home board by board from the shipyard. I'd cut the legs out at the shipyard and bring 'em home [unintelligible] – hardly made a mess or nothing, you know. When I left there, they asked me to leave it there. They said they wanted to have it. Put a rubber mat – little pigeon holes for all the things on the top. Anyway –

HS: What's going on at the shipyard at this time?

RA: Well, the shipyard was back in the boat shop. Back there – we had to build a boat for - a sports fishing boat. We built a sport fishing boat. We had all kinds of Coast Guard work.

Coast Guard work – I even changed some of the Coast Guard – the Coast Guard had a – eighty-three-footers and the frame’s about that far apart. And back in the [unintelligible] they had two staffs going down for the rudders – the propellers were right ahead of that – they had blocks – they put a block – an oak block in there and they’d drill a hole in the – and by the time they drilled a hole in that block, there was only that much wood left on either side of it, and that rudder would shake and crack ‘em loose and they’d leak like a sieve, see. So we had constant fixing them blocks. So one day this Coast Guard guy come over – not George Burns, he’s not there, he retired – there was another Coast Guard guy come, and he was pretty much – got along really good with him – all the Coast Guard work we were doing. I told him, I say, “You know, if we cut through that frame and put that block larger, you’d have no problems anymore.” The bolts hold – everything holds. He said, “You make me up a drawing of it, see what you mean.” – Now when you’re cutting through the thing – well, the frame – when we cut through, we’re not – that frame won’t come knocked into the block and it all will be bolted together. “Make me up a drawing of it.”

So I made up a drawing of it. He sent it back [unintelligible] – “Go ahead and build the job.” So he made up a bid to do the job – and my boss went out and raised hell with me. He says, “Now” he says, “You did it. You made the job so better now, you’d like to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. You see, you killed him now. Now we get no more jobs but this one. Well, you got eight boats to do. You’re going to make so much off of each boat, you know.”

Well, of course, they liked it. That’s one of my jobs I was doing. We had – I got in a big fuss with them about – the old man, he’d say the kid wasn’t doing right, wasn’t making enough money in the business so he came – stepped back in there again, and – the father – and we had a boat off of Point Arena, a Coast Guard boat went on the rocks up there. [Unintelligible] He took me up to bid on the job – you could only take a boat to go along and bid on the job – so I went up with him to bid on it, and I bidded – oh, I figured we could do the job at that time for – well, four hundred dollars for the – work and materials are about four hundred dollars. So I told the old man, I said, “Bid it – bid at eight hundred.” I said, “We can do the job for about four hundred. Let’s bid it at eight hundred and we’ll make a good profit.” Okay. So anyway, we came back and we – they sent the boat down – a big truck came down and the Coast Guard [unintelligible] – it was one of them life – lifeboats, you know. They had tied it between the island and the lighthouse and something else and it went and broke the rope and ended up on – kicked from the plank – put a couple of these planks in it and [unintelligible]. I figured it didn’t cost us – I said four hundred, and I don’t think it cost us three hundred. We added it up later and said the thing could gone for about three hundred and fifty dollars, but we went four hundred. I told ‘em four hundred. I told ‘em to go eight hundred, and that was a – a damned good profit off it.

The old man come down and raised some holy hell with me. Hollering and blowing his stack – says that we lost our shirt on the damn job. And another fellow that worked there,

he – he was my best man when I got married – he couldn't figure out where in hell could we have lost our shirt on that damn job. And the kid was – his son was – you know, "Ha, ha, ha" you know – behind his father going [makes noise] to make him – to his father – [unintelligible] making all kinds of – like his father. So I said [unintelligible] up on the pencil there [unintelligible]. So I said, "Hell, we done the job – and as far as materials go, the materials didn't come to that much. We had a lot of the stuff laying around here," but I say, "We used it up, but we didn't buy anything. Only two pieces of cedar we bought." So – the kid come down and he says to me, "Bob, don't let the old man fool you like that. You said eight hundred, he made it sixteen hundred. We made plenty of money on that job. He doubled what you told him – doubled it." He said, "Don't ever let him kid you like that again." He says, "I know the old man would get mad that I told you that, but just keep that in mind from now on, any time you bid with him on a job." I said, I'm not going to even bid with him on a job anymore." I refuse to go.

HS: Why did the old man give you guys such a hard time?

RA: Oh, he's just playing around with us, you know. He would have a crinkle in his eye –

HS: I see.

RA: He was a smart old guy, you know. He just – I'd work overtime for him and he'd say, "Put – on the back of the timecard, don't put it on the front of the timecards – overtime on the back of the timecards." When I'd get my check at the end of the week, it would be the same – same price, you know. I'd get no overtime. I'd say, "Hey, where's my overtime? I put two hours overtime the other day." "Well, what did you do with it?" I said, "You told me to write it on the back of the card." "Oh, I never look at the back of the cards. You're lucky you have a damn job, you know –" Place you like –

HS: But – so you didn't get that overtime? You actually didn't get it?

RA: No, they did all kinds of crazy –

HS: Well, now –

RA: A roll of line come in from – what's the name, over at – the ship janitors, Johnson and Joseph? They sent over a load of line we needed or some bolts or nails and they'd be thirty, forty, fifty cents – or sixty cents charge for bringing it over. It would probably cost more than that now. They say, okay, there's a – they'd leave it off and I'd sign for the receiving of it, and they'd say, "Well, you owe us seventy-five cents or thirty cents or whatever it was for the freight to bring it over." And I'd say, "Wait." I'd go up to petty cash and get it out of the safe. The safe was open. I knew how to open it anyway, he give me the combination. I opened the safe, and there's no petty cash there. The kids would take the petty cash. He had three or four other kids, you know, they'd take – they'd steal all the gas out of the place, they'd steal everything we had. The kids would run off with

it, you know, his own kids. And [the nephews?] – little younger kids, they run off with everything.

So I paid it out of my own pocket. I'd give 'em the seventy-five cents, see. And I'd say to the boss, I'd say, "Hey, you owe me seventy-five cents." And he's standing next to his son. And he says to his son, "Well, pay Bob the seventy-five cents." "Well, you pay him. Hell, I ain't going to pay no money, you pay 'em." Now that's father and son fighting, you see.

HS: Yeah.

RA: Well, I - they'd turn around and walk away and made me stand there an hour and I'm out seventy-five cents. And an old fellow named Henry Eaton was working there and he says, "Don't let 'em fool you, Bob." "This time," he says, "send it back. That will take care of 'em." So it wasn't a week later – it wasn't a week later that – I know something else come in, paint or something, came in there and there was a dollar and-a-half charge on it, something big and heavy, an anchor or some big thing came in, you know. And I see the dollar thirty-cent charge on it and I said, "I don't have any money." I went up to look in the petty cash and there's nothing in petty cash. It's gone. So I says, "Well, if there's nothing in petty cash, I can't pay it." "Well, if we take it back, they're going to charge you twice if I come back again with it." "Take it back." They take it back and the boss comes in the other day and he says, "Where's – did that anchor ever come over? There was an order for an anchor." And I said, "Yeah, it came." "Well, where is it? Where did you put – we need it on the ship out here." "Well, they took it back." "What did they take it back for?" I said, "Well, there was a dollar-and-a-half charge or something on it." "Well, didn't you take it out of the petty cash and pay it?" "Petty cash? There's no petty cash up there. Where's the petty cash at? There's no money there." "Damn it anyway, these damned kids are taking – [making yelling sounds]. Didn't you pay it?" And I said, "No, I didn't pay it. I didn't have any money on me. I have no money on me. I'm broke. I have no money." Ah – the shingles on the roof would be bouncing up and down with the father and son fighting over the petty cash. I'm not – "Anytime you don't have any money upstairs – well, there'll be petty cash up there for you now." And I said, "No, I ain't even going to handle it." I said, "When the guy comes in with the next load of lumber, he'll have to talk to somebody else in the yard. I don't want to have nothing more to do with it." [Unintelligible.]

Well, anyway, I stayed up there – then my mother started raising hell with me. She says, "I want some grandkids. You're thirty." I was thirty years of age now. Thirty years old now. By the time I got out of the Army and four years later – from the time I went in, you know, I was twenty or so – went in – twenty-five when I got out. Now three – a couple of years have gone by and I was working – and I worked good for the outfit. They were good to me. Had a good room, everything taken care of. On Saturdays I'd go down and work at Oliver's, tried to marry the Oliver Salt Girl – owned the Oliver Salt Works. And we'd go down to fix them windmills on Saturday and sometimes Sundays. We'd go down

there –the duck hunters shoot ‘em, shoot ‘em up full of holes. That windmill – it pumps the water from the salt mine and they’d get shot up pretty bad.

Well, we’d work – we’d go down and work in the morning, and in the afternoon – it’d blow so bad in the afternoon, you can’t go out on them. The little catwalks – they had these little small catwalks out to them things, and the water blows over the – suds – white suds blows over the salt. So we’d knock off in the afternoon, they’d feed us. It was our lunch. Oh, a beautiful lunch. Big lunch. We’d get stuff like [unintelligible] – we didn’t need no dinner when I come home at night because we had such a big lunch. Ice cream and everything, you know. Then we’d work up to maybe eight o’clock, seven o’clock when it was light in the summertime, fixing them windmills. We didn’t do badly, we were getting paid – I guess time-and-a-half – or double-time – time-and-a-half, I guess. Maybe even got three times, I don’t remember now. That was quite a few years ago.

So anyway, I was having a pretty good-sized check coming to me. Well, living the way I did, sometimes I wouldn’t cash three of my checks. The boss would open the door and say, hey, “Red, have you cashed your last two months’ checks or the past two weeks’ checks.” and I’d say, “No, not yet.” “Well, dammit, go over and cash ‘em. We’re – my books are all messed up, you know.” And I’d say, “All right, I’ll go and cash ‘em.” I was putting more money in the bank – had nine thousand dollars in the bank, you know. Saved all my money and that was it.

HS: And this is still the 40's? Into the 50's maybe now?

RA: This is in the 40's –

HS: In the 40's.

RA: This is ‘40 – ‘46 – I come in ‘40 – I got home in ‘46, ‘47, ‘48.

HS: One little question before we go on, I have one question, did you ever get that overtime? Did you ever think of going to the union regarding overtime?

RA: Nah. I wouldn’t never do anything like that anyway. Nah. When I worked for Crowley, I never bothered about anything. I worked hours overtime and never charged ‘em anything for it. I’m not that kind of a guy. I mean, they liked me and I had a good job. I’m not that kind of a guy. I won’t fight for stuff like that. I mean, if I – if they want to – I told old man [Stone] one time – I was working for him there one time and he had to put a thing on a boom – on the back end of a boom – it was a square boom and they wanted to put a round fitting on it. We had to glue some wedges on it and round them to put this round fitting on there. When I – it was late in the afternoon when he give me the job to do and I told him, I said, I put the wedging on and after I got ‘em on there, one way or another, they hand me the fitting – they give me a measurement of it and they were too damn small. So I got to knock them wedges off and put large wedges on there. Glue ‘em on, so

it would be dry during the night and the next morning round it off and put it the way they want it. But then the next night – that was Thursday night. Friday – they wanted it Friday night so they'd go out sailing Sunday – Saturday.

The old man come down to me and says – he saw me knocking the wedges off – he says, “You know that thing has to be done tonight. Get this thing loaded off.” I say, “Hey, listen,” I say, “These blocks will be glued on here before I go home, if it takes me all – ‘til twelve o’clock tonight to get it done.” I said, “There won’t be one damned penny out of your pocket neither.” I said, “I’ll do it on my own.” I said, “I made a mistake cutting the blocks too short.” Oh, he got mad and went on home. They said “That’s fine, Red, make the old man mad so he’ll go home.” All the guys in the yard, you see, Red just makes him mad and he goes home every time Red makes him mad see, then he goes home.

Anyway, I – no, I never – I never fought – my work with Crowley. Oh, there were a lot of times I could have demanded more money, but I – I back off. I mean, I – my men, working with me, made more money than I did sometimes. When I was foreman – I was foreman and I got about fifty cents an hour more, and they did installation and they got – they got as much as I did or more, you know, on a clock-in. They got paid more money for that and they were making more money than I was making as a foreman, you know. And I never kicked about it. I say, “Hell, I’m happy. I got more money than I know what to do with.” Money never did bother me. I’m here – I do jobs – I’m putting two lifeboats and sail on here and I’ll charge the guy maybe – I work for five cents an hour. That’s what I work here, for about five cents an hour. I don’t get – I worked on that boat – I don’t know how many hours I worked on that one over there, and the guy owes me forty dollars. And that’s all – forty dollars. And I worked hours and hours on that one. Get all that – a cat tore it all up. Belongs to a fellow down on the waterfront down there. He hasn’t paid me yet. The boat will sit there until he pays me.

Anyway –

HS: Now you saved nine thousand dollars and you say your mom was telling you that she wanted grandkids –

RA: Yeah, she wanted some grandkids, you know. She’s asking me to get out and get a girlfriend. Well, the girl in Berkeley I know for years. I asked her, and she said, “No.” She didn’t want – she was a schoolteacher then and she said, “No, I don’t want to get married. I don’t want nothing to do with – I’m single and – I don’t want nothing to do with it.” She had a sailboat and she was sailing. I was sailing with her every once in a while.

Then I met a girl. She – she was a doctor. She bought a boat and she rode it up on the rocks over in Alameda. And I said – she brought it back to the shipyard to be repaired. And I – gee, the boat – had a big dent in the front of the plank, you know, and the front

had to be put in. And I – “Who does the boat belong to?” It belongs to a Dr. Holcomb – Newcomb, Newcomb. Which is a woman doctor. Well, here she come in to see the boat – and she’s young, you know, wasn’t more than a couple of years older than I am, you know. She’s from New York but she’s Jewish. So, I said to her, “Can you – how did you run the boat in the rocks?” “I don’t know. I was just trying to learn how to sail.” she says. And I said, “Well, gee, you ought to have somebody teach you, show you how.” “Well, do you know how to sail?” And I said, “Yeah, I know how to sail.” “Well, can I get you to go out with me sometime?” “Yeah, anytime you want, I’ll go out with you.” Well, I got quite a little thing with her. I went sailing with her, showed her how to run the boat and she got – it wasn’t a very big boat, about forty-foot, you know, something like that.

She invited me up to her house to do some work in her house. Well, she was like one of them honey-do-this, honey-do-that, you know. “Honey, fix this, fix that.” And then – you couldn’t even touch her, you know, I mean, she was – the girl in Berkeley was the same way. So, you know, I mean, don’t want anything to do with any men, they just – just a schoolteacher, she went off with her party dancing – the doctor, she’s above me, she’s a doctor. I’m just a shipyard worker, you know, but I can teach her how to sail. I can put her plumbing in the house for her. “Fix this, fix that.” Fix something else for her. Her mother got a hold of me one day and invited me to dinner. They invited me to dinner. Invited me to dinner one night. And, you know, this is 1947. They invited me to dinner and – I can remember that’d be a while [unintelligible] I can remember. They invited me to dinner and had a chicken. They were on a diet. So they had me help to eat the chicken. Then they – they thought the chicken was so good, they ate the chicken – they got themselves sick ‘cause they’d been on a diet, you know.

Anyway, the mother called me out in the kitchen and she – there was another man, trying to sell the daughter some medical equipment. And the mother says to me – she couldn’t get the oven pan back in the place so I went over and put it back in. She says, “I want to tell you something,” she says, “I love you like a son.” – her mother – her father was dead – “I love you like a son, but you’ll never marry my daughter.” And I said, “Well, I never wanted – I don’t want to marry your daughter to start with. I know what the [unintelligible] is – I’m Catholic, she’s Jewish, see – [unintelligible]. We were always good friends, you know.

All the guys in the shipyard, they wanted to get me a girl. So they got me a blind date with a girl that went to high school the same time I did. I didn’t know her in high school, but – Vernita Mason, her name was. But she never married either. She’s still – I think she’s still single. Boy, she was the coldest fish I ever went out with. She wouldn’t let me touch her. I took her to the best theaters in San Francisco – dinner – she wouldn’t even let me take her by the arm down Market Street to get – I’d park my car in front of her house and we’d take the train over to San Francisco. They had a train going across – you couldn’t get a place to park over there. So I’d meet her at her house, take her to San Francisco, bring her back. I’d take her – she’d run in the door – “Good night,” and bang, goes the door, and I’d get in my car and go home. Well, I went out with her for a year and

the guys down in the shipyard says to me – well, six months I went with her at that time – and they'd say, "How are you making out with her?" "She's terrible" I'd say. I – I'd take her somewhere in my car and I'd drive up in front of her house, and before I could turn the key out, she's got the door open and in the house. "Good-bye!" She's already in before I got the engine stop running. "Oh" they says, "Dump her." So I didn't call her no more. I didn't.

I used to always call her on Friday nights. Go downtown to Oakland to eat and I'd go call her on the phone. [Unintelligible]. She was, "I'd like to go to the opera Sunday – I'd like to go to Golden Gate Park Sunday." "Ok, hey, fine, I'll take you. I'll come and pick you up." Well, I didn't do – I didn't call her on Friday night. About three weeks went by and she called me up at the office. I was putting a water line on the side of the boat, and it was in between the building and the dry dock, I put the water line down in and bring the other one back. It's like a long bat when you get it in there – cut the water line in. And she called on the phone, she wanted to know what was happening. So I says, "Well, I just thought – maybe –" I'd been busy, you know, one thing or another, and she says, "Well, would you like to go? I've got tickets to the Ice Follies." So I says, "Okay." Went back out. I was kind of excited. When the boat went into the water, the guys said, "Hey, Red, come down to the Coast Guard, come down and take a look at this. The two water lines went like that – you know, they missed one another. How in the hell did I do that?" Well, your girlfriend called you up. That's why, you're in love, you know." And they made all kinds of cracks like that. I went down and straightened it out, you know, with a skiff in the water.

I went back with her again, but it was the same old story. So I told – my mother wanted to know how we was doing. So I said, "Well, I'm not doing very good. You know, I don't have no intention of getting married and I don't –" "Oh, you can't be that way" she says. "You have to learn how to – the way you meet – get a girl is go to a dance. You'll meet at a dance and you'll have a girlfriend in no time flat." "Well, I don't know how to dance." "Well, you have to learn how to dance. The YWCA is having lessons down right behind the Colonial Cafeteria where you eat your dinner every night. They're having a YWCA there and they're going to have ten lessons for seven dollars or – seven lessons for ten – seven lessons for ten dollars. So go down and sign up for it."

I went down and I signed up. They told us the following Tuesday, to be there Tuesday night. So I dressed up – go home and got bathed and showered and went down – went and got something to eat and went over there – supposed to be there at seven o'clock. I got there at seven. It was summertime, it was still light. The girl says – the woman behind the desk says, "Are you Mr. Alexander?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Well, I'm sorry, I've got to give you your money back. We've got forty girls and you're the only man that signed up." I said, that's all right with me! She says, "No, we can't have it that way." So she give me back my money.

My mother called me up down at the shipyard the next day, down at Cryer's – I was

working at Cryer's now, on Dennison Street there – and she says, “How did you make out last night?” I said, “I didn't make out. Forty girls and only one man.” “Oh, good heavens” she says. Well, all right. I got a phone call from her about three or four days later and she says, “I went by the YMCA, they've got ten lessons for seven dollars.” Just the opposite. I said, “Forget it.” “Well, I already signed you up. I paid the money and signed you up. You got to go.” So it was on a – it was a Friday night over there. So I said, “Well, okay, I went home and shaved and – I had a – my car – I had bought a car in the meantime – drove my car down. It was summertime, it was light, you know, and it was for weeks – it was for seven, ten weeks, seven dollars. Well, I went there. And at that time they had about thirty, forty men, and they had about sixty women, you know. The guy that was giving the lesson, his wife worked at Capitol across the street – you know where Capitol is?

HS: Oh, yeah –

RA: You know where the old YMCA building is on Telegraph there? Well, his wife brought all the women over from Capitol. All the old ladies had come over to help the fellows – show us how to dance, you know. Well, they started out with a circle. They put all the girls in the circle and all the boys in a circle on the outside, and then they'd go – make the girls go this way and the boys go that way. Then the girl – the one that stopped – that's your partner. Well, my wife – became my wife – but my partner – well, they only had the two-step, you know [unintelligible]. Next week, we went by the same way [unintelligible] stopped right in front of me again. And the little girl that was with her, the guy that hung around near me all the time, you always pick up a buddy or a friend or something else – pick up another buddy, you know – he wanted to dance with her, so it came out perfect for him too, you see.

Well, the third night we went there, I'll be darned, I only missed by one. I got his little girlfriend and he got mine. My wife was tall like I was. She was almost six foot. He was only about five foot and she was only about five foot. So we switched. The teacher come out and said, “You – I've been watching you two. You've got to break it up. You cannot dance with the same girl every time because” – he says – “You never learn nothing that way. You gotta have a different woman each time. You come with me” he said. And an old lady from Capitol building there. She had red hair, old enough to be my mother and she had one of them knitted sweaters on, and she had big breasts that stuck way out. I swear, I never seen anything like that, they stuck straight out. And she was a woman about – she must have been in her seventies, at least – must have had some kind of false garments on or something, you know. Well, I was too scared to get up to her, you know. I sort of hold back from her, you know. She wanted to pull me in, and I said, “No – oh.” “You don't know how to lead. You're supposed to do the leading, you know.” I bumped her feet a couple of times. I was too scared to dance with her. I – went over and stood against the wall.

Finally had intermission –

HS: Red, let me – we’re going to run out of tape.

[End of Tape 3 – Side 6 (B) Part 6 of 10]

[Begin Tape 4 – Side 7 (A) Part 7 of 10]

HS: Okay, so you – so then what happens – you’re at the lesson?

RA: Well, yeah. Then one night – the second, third or fourth lesson down there – it was pouring rain outside. I had my car parked – I had an old Plymouth at that time – I parked it outside the door. Her name was Doris – Niles. Her name was Doris Niles – the girl who had been my partner there. Nice girl. Tall as I was, six – almost six foot. Nicely – beautifully built, but a little bit older than I. Anyway, she says, “Oh, boy, I’ve got to take a taxi home tonight.” She says, “It’s pouring rain out there, I’ll get soaked.” And I said, “Well, see that car parked down there?” I said, “Where do you live? I’ll drive you home.” “I live up on Claremont” – she says – “Near the Claremont Hotel.” I said, “Well, I live over the Mountain – so I follow Mountain Boulevard home – I’ll drive you home – I follow Mountain Boulevard home – Park Boulevard.” So, “Okay.” I went out and I get the car, get the door open for you. So she – it’s pouring rain – she comes tearing out with a newspaper over her head and jumps in the – I open the door and she jumps in the car. That old car had a long shift. The first one up on the – the ‘38 Plymouth had a long shift and you had to go way down with the damn thing. I never had one like that since.

Anyway, when she got in the car, most every girl I’d ever taken out – the doctor, the girl from Berkeley, or the – or another girl I met – another one I met in a restaurant I took home – they’d all sit up against the doorknob – even when I took her home from the shipyard, you know, after they’d taken home – they lived out East Oakland somewhere – each girlfriend – gave a ride home – they’d hold on to the doorknob and about that close to the door, you know. And – all that room between me and them – well, she got in the car that night, she got right up against me. And I said, “Hey, you got to move over.” I got the car started. “I can’t – I’m going hit your – I’m going to hit your knee with that shift. I can’t get the shift all the way down.” She had her knee up there. “Okay.” She put her knee over, but she didn’t move over. So I say, well, that’s nice, you know. So I drive out and she tells me where her house is and, you know, I drive up to her house and she don’t have a hand on the doorknob or nothing. So she was fiddling with her purse and she opens her purse and takes the key out of her purse and she’s still right up against me pretty close, you know. It was kind of nice. She handed me her key, you know. And I said, okay, I says – “Well, what’s the rush?” she says, “What’s the rush? Wait until it stops raining.”

Well, it’s starting to ease up a little bit. Okay. We were sitting in the car talking for a few minutes, you know, and finally she says, “Okay – okay” she says. She wants to call it a

night. And I say, "Okay." So I got out of the car, go around – she didn't get out of the car. She – every other one opened the door themselves and got out. But she – I had to open the door for her, you know. I opened the door and I walked her to her door and she stood there while I opened the door for her – took the key back – "Good night." And she wanted to give me a kiss, but I – I kind of pulled back. I think she wanted to give me a kiss, but I pulled back, you know.

So anyway, it all went on – we finished the lesson, six weeks – coming up to her home from [unintelligible] take her home. Then the lessons come to an end and I didn't hear no more about anything. My mother said, "Well, how did you make out?" "Oh, I met a nice girl there, but I don't know." And my mother said, "Oh, you're impossible. I give up." she says. Anyway, I was in the boat shop about – oh, it must have been four or five months later – or more than that. Anyway, the guy come in the boat shop and he lived up on College and Claremont and he had a car park – now it's a Safeway store, but it was a parking lot then in 1950 – 19 – now the years have jumped over. Now we're in 1948, in late '48 now. They backed into a speed boat and broke a plank in the speedboat and wanted to know if he could have somebody come up there and fix it. So none of the other guys in the yard ever wanted to go. They said, "You want to go, Red, and fix the plank?" I said, "Well, okay, I'll go up [unintelligible] and put a new plank in for him." I went up and put the plank in.

In the meantime, though, I got a letter from the YMCA saying they were going to have an anniversary party for all those who took the lessons, said to go back and bring a friend and brush up on your – you've learned to dance now, now don't let it go to waste. Come back and have – we'll have a little party. So I got the letter – and my mother had – saw the letter and wanted to know, "Are you going?" And I said, "No, I don't think I'm going to go." So anyway, I went in and put the plank in this boat and I looked down the street – there – that's the house down there where I took that girl home. I wonder maybe she would like to go. She was a nice girl. Nice woman. So I said, "I'll go down and see if she's home." And I went down and her mother came to the door. Her mother's German. My wife is German, part German. So her mother came to the door and had a German accent, and I said to the mother, "Is Doris at home? No, she's taking care of – her sister's about to have a baby. She's taking care of her sister." "Oh, I wanted to know if she got a letter from the YMCA." "Yes, she got one. I know she got a letter." "I wanted to know if she wanted to go to the dance they're having." She said, "Well, that's for you to – but I'll give you my phone number, you can call and tell –" She gave me her phone number. And I called her that night. I was shaking like a leaf. I called her and, yeah, she'd like to go. "Fine, so I'll pick you up Saturday night, seven o'clock."

So there was a big restaurant – not a restaurant, it was a market over there where the old car barn was on Telegraph. I'd been down to the market and they had a big beautiful bakery there. So I went into the bakery and I bought a big coffeecake. They used to have them big coffeecakes like that big around, they were hollow in the middle, you know. I bought one of them and took it over it to the family, you know. The father – oh, that was

wonderful, you know. I took her down to the dance and after the dance I said, "Well" – the dance got over – the party got over before nine o'clock, so I said, "Well, I'll take you home." She said, "I don't want to go home!" She said, "I want to – let's get lost someplace." And I said, "Where are we going to get lost? I don't know." "Well, there's Lake Merritt" she says. And I said, now there's a girl that – never been out on a date before. She told me she never had a – I'm the first date she ever had. Her – doctor chased her out 'cause he was at home and he says she's going to have a nervous breakdown, get her away from her parents. Her parents were taking her money and father was – he had been a marshal and he got his legs frozen and he was on disability and the girls – he had three or four girls and a son, and the one son left home, and one girl married a sailor during the war, and he only had two girls left home. They're paying the old man – keeping the old man in the house alive. She told me, "I don't have no money. My father takes all my money." She says, "I'd like to get away from home." She [said?] that a couple of times.

So I says to her [unintelligible] "I don't want to go home, I want to – it's five o'clock, I want to get lost." "Well" I said, "I'm on Broadway here now, how am I going to get lost?" Well, I know there's a little creek down the street, Fremont Creek, I used to get polliwogs down there. There's a little bridge that goes across. Go down stream and come up under the trees. I said, "Would you like that?" "Oh, this is wonderful," she said. I don't have to tell you more about that. But anyway, she was such a nice girl. So I got going with her. I was taking her – we went out to dinner, to the show, you know. She was happy about everything, you know. Always snuggled up to me real close. And, "I don't want to go home" you know. I took her to Ali Baba – Ali Baba had – go down the road [unintelligible] Ali Baba was off on 22nd and Franklin there. It was an – all college kids – young women, you know, from the college. They were all nice – nice group of people –

HS: Was this dancing?

RA: Hum?

HS: A place to go dancing?

RA: Dancing, yeah. [Unintelligible]. Had intermissions, you know, stuff like this. You meet a nicer class of people there – and, well, we went on and on, dancing. My mother kept – "How you making out with her, how you making out?" [Unintelligible] Took my mother and her – went down to Santa Cruz. My mother took an awful fancy to her. She liked my mother too.

But anyway, we – she kept telling me every time I'd take her out somewhere – now this is on into '49 now, we're into '49, and she kept telling me, she says, "I'm ready. I'm ready." You know. Well, now it jumped over '49 and into '50 and I still haven't got the message yet, you know, from her. So one day I was on – I think it was in '50 now – moved into 50, and we're on a picnic – we're on a picnic up here somewheres in the hills,

you know. And she says, "I'm ready. I'm ready. I'm ready." And I says to – I went back to the shipyard and said, "This girl keeps telling me she's ready." "Oh, you damn fool, she wants you to pop the question to her, you know. She wants to marry you. You like the girl enough to marry her?" "Well, yeah, I love her very much. She's real nice, you know." I said, "Okay, I'll think about it."

So I – I had a Chinese junk – I got a Chinese junk – I made a dozen at one time. I made jewelry cases out of 'em – I've got one left up on the shelf up there –

HS: It's a model ship –

RA: Yeah, a model – I made a model ship for her. A Chinese junk. I'll show it to you after – a case, you know. Lift up the house and there's a jewelry case underneath it. It's all lined and everything. So, I said, well, I went down to [Vanderbilt?] and I bought her an engagement ring. And I bought a ring that – new – just came out. It's a ring that takes the wedding ring and the engagement ring, when you marry, the rings snap together – locks 'em – they snap like, you know, you can't take 'em apart again. They're one ring. Something new, it just came out. So I bought it and I put it in a little case and put it in the Chinese junk.

So I met her at the house – now this is in – is it June? June. About the end of June. I asked her, I say, I wanted to take her to a dance – going to a dance and then a show or something – I say, "Would you like to get lost instead of going to the dance?" "Oh, yeah, I'd enjoy that much more" she said. I go, "Okay. You want to go down to old Piedmont Creek?" "Yeah" she says. "Fine." We drove down to Piedmont? Creek and I said I – it's starting to get dark now, it's getting dark outside. I said, "I made something for you." I gave her the junk. "Oh" she said, "It's such a cute little boat." She was – look it over, you know, like that –

HS: Had you ever given her a model boat before?

RA: No. I had never given her anything before. Taken her to dinner, you know. No, no presents. Never had given her a present. I'd only known her about a year, you know. So I said, "Well then, open the case – it's a jewelry case. You can put your stuff in there." "Oh, that's right!" She opened the lid on it – there's a little chest inside there. Little – chest. "Yes" she says. "Why don't you open that?" She hesitated for a long time and looked over at me, you know, and I says, "Why don't you open it and see what's in it." She opened up and there was the ring in there, you know, the ring inside there. "I want to go home to my mother!" [Laughing] So I said, okay, drove her home. Went to see her mother. "Look what I got!" she says to her mother. And her mother says, "Well, I expected it." She says, "You're old enough to know what you're doing." Oh, God, yes. She's seven years older than I am, I find out. Now, I'm thirty-two and she's thirty-nine already, see. Now, her birthday's in October – the 8th, and mine's October the 16th, see. So – and then that next birthday she'd be forty and I'd be thirty – thirty-three. Well, she

was such a nice girl, what the hell – what’s age got to do with it? You know what I mean? But it is late to raise a family, you know, I mean, kind of late to raise a family. We didn’t have any kind of thought for that.

Well, anyway, when she told her father, her father was smoking a pipe, and he pretty near bit the pipe in fact when she told him we was getting married. He says to me, “What do you do?” He says, “What do you – what job do you have?” I said “I’m a boat builder, ship riser, boat builder.” Another sailor” he says. His other daughter just married a sailor. Another sailor in the family. He didn’t say anything more to us. He was – I could see he was mad. Her mother – oh, her sister came downstairs and was very happy for her. Went and got some ice cream out and had some cake and ice cream. Talked to them for a while and then went on home.

So we had to set the date. We got married August the 5th. She had a vacation coming. Now here’s where the climax starts in. So I go back to the shipyard, I say, “Hey, I’m going to get married.” Well, there was a big hem-haw in – between my super – the boss – he went home and told his wife I was going to get married and I would leave her mother. Well, immediately – as soon as I told ‘em that, they – they laid me off. I was laid off that night.

HS: Oh. I’ll be.

RA: So I told him that night I was going to get married. He went over and told his wife – in other words, I’d be leaving. I already had rented an apartment for us, you know, but I – I had to wait to get the apartment. We weren’t going to get married until –

HS: One detail I was going to ask you about, her dad – what had her dad done in his lifetime?

RA: He was a marshal in the –

HS: A marshal? What do you mean by –

RA: – in Dutch Flat – in Dutch Flat. A marshal for the government.

HS: Oh, I see. A U.S. Marshall?

RA: Yeah, U.S. Marshall. [Unintelligible] people don’t behave themselves.

HS: [Laughing]

RA: He got frozen in – in the snow up in the mountains. His legs were bad.

HS: I see.

RA: I've got his pistol there under my table. I got his pistol. He used to wear it up under his arm when he came to town. He couldn't wear the six-gun, so he had to – had to be armed, you know, he had to go to court, he always had a gun up under his arm. And I have it under my bureau to protect myself.

HS: So you – that's amazing. So you were actually laid off?

RA: They laid me off, yeah. Told me that was it. So I says, "Well –" that wasn't – they laid me off in the morning, before lunchtime. That was a Monday morning. So I said, "Well, I don't give a damn." I say. You know, I mean, things were slow. They were slow –

HS: Okay, Red, let me ask you, you worked a long time for those guys?

RA: Oh, I worked a long time. I worked –

HS: Before the war.

RA: Before the war. And – well, of course, I was gone three years, four years during the war, but then I worked four years after I come home. I worked – I figured ten, fifteen years I'd been with 'em.

HS: Again, I know – I ask the same question again, but was – did you have any thought to go to the union and say, "This guy laid me off or –"

RA: I wouldn't do that.

HS: How come?

RA: I was going down to the union hall anyway to get another job. Oh, I could go over to Stone's and go to work. I could go to Alameda Boat Works and go to work, you know –

HS: But I mean did you have any inclination or idea that this is unreasonable? That they're laying you off for this reason?

RA: Yeah, I – I was hurt about it. I was hurt.

HS: But you didn't want to go to the union?

RA: No, I wasn't going to go to the union. I would never do that on anybody. No matter what they did, I wouldn't go to the union. That – they are my family – no, I'm not –

HS: Okay –

RA: I go on my own and I'm independent. I can get a job or go into business for myself. I can do anything. So I – I had money. I had nine thousand in the bank. I had a car. I had my tools. I had my good health. I was feeling healthy. I felt like I was only nineteen, you know. I'm thirty-two, thirty-three years old. So – no, I had no – I didn't want this to get out, you know, they fired – they're out of business now anyway and they're all dead, most of 'em are anyway.

Anyway, well, I said, "I'm going over to the hamburger joint down the street." Between Cryer and the Pacific Dry Dock there was a little hamburger joint there, used to go get a hamburger. Well, I used to get one on Thursday nights. Rather than go downtown, I'd get a hamburger – they had very good hamburgers there. Once a week, it's all I – I'd get a hamburger once a week. And he makes it the good way, all the onions and everything in it, you know. He had been a cook over in this Palace hotel in San Francisco. When they opened it, he had a big – we got the big armor plate for him from the shipyard. A big piece of – and was cooking on it – and he's a nice guy. Give us – all the guys in the shipyard got a fair rate, you know.

Well, it was lunchtime, see, and I thought, well, I'll stop off and get a hamburger before I go down to the hall. Go down to the hall and let 'em know that I'm out of job and then they'll get me another job someplace else, see.

HS: You hadn't been down to the hall for a long time –

RA: No, I hadn't been in the hall for years. I hadn't been in that hall for years.

HS: That's what I thought, okay.

RA: I didn't go to any meetings anymore. I didn't even – there was so much smoke down in that place, my – my mother used to blame me for smoking. My sweater was – the clothes had tobacco smoke all over 'em. There'd be about a hundred million there all smoking, you know, in the hall, brothers going through all them motions and everything and – what's going on in the union. Well, I didn't even go there anymore. Well, anyway, they knew that I was working in the boat shop. They didn't bother me. They never fined me for not going to meetings or nothing.

HS: Had you ever been active in the union?

RA: Huh?

HS: Had you ever been active in the union?

RA: No, I never had anything to do with 'em. No, nothing. Just a member. Just a plain member. Well-liked, though. Paid my dues. Never had any problems. [Lovejoy] tried to get me one time, and he didn't – they let me go on that job. I went back to work – I was

laid off one time and went back to work and was supposed to report in and I didn't. And he tried to get me on the carpet. And he got killed, I told you. They rolled a load of lumber on him.

Anyway –

HS: So you go to the hamburger -

RA: I go to the hamburger place and Red Donny, he was the foreman for the Pacific Dry Dock, and he knew me real well. He knew me 'cause I'd – we'd done business back and forth between the boat [shop?]. He knew me – buddy-buddy, you know. And he says, "What are you – I never see you in here eating lunchtime." He said, "What's going on now with you?" And I said, "Oh, I – they just laid me off. I'm going down to the hall to get a job. Look for a job." I said, "Maybe I'll take a couple of days off. I haven't had a day off in quite a while." I said, "I've been working, you know, this and that, working you know." So he says, "Well, hell, don't go down there." He says, "I'll ring up and tell Donny – you come – I need a man down – come over and work for me!" I said, "Okay." Well – after I eat my lunch I went down with him – hired me right in, right away. That was my first job with Pacific Dry Dock. So I said, "Now Red [Donny]" I said, "I'm going to get married next week." "Oh, work a week and then get married and take a vacation and come back." He says, "I want you to finish this one job for me." He said, "You'll help me out if you do this one job for me. I got a job that I want you to help me out with."

HS: What was the job?

RA: Well, it was on a barge. On a big steel barge. And they had an Army barge. And they had a channel run the top and they wanted oak – four-by-four oak – put all around it and it had to be bolted through and had to have the splice, you know. So he says, "I want you to – you know, finish up." He's got to get out of here by Friday night. "And I want you to –" Now this is Monday – Monday afternoon by the time I got in there. And I had to go get my tools down at the end of the yard. I had to go back down and get my – so I went back to Cryer's and I – they weren't there. They were out for lunch – they took long lunch hours and then come back. [Unintelligible]. He was my best man when I got married. He was working in the yard. And I said, "I've come to get my tools. Can you give me a hand to put 'em in my car." I said, "I got a job down the street." He says, "Oh, you don't want to do that. They'll have you back on here again." And I said, "No, not after what they did to me." I said, "No, I'm going. I'm going."

So I cleaned out my room up there. I had all my stuff out of her room. I had to move it down to my apartment, so they knew I was going. Anyway, they got a girl in later to take – the girl smoked and they wouldn't have – they only had her for two or three times and then let her go too. I found out later. But anyway, he helped me put my tools in the car and drove down to the shipyard. And the company says – we're supposed to pick the tools up but we save fifty cents – it cost us fifty cents to bring the tools there, but we use

[unintelligible] bringing the tools there. We took care of the tools –

So anyway, that's fine with me. I go along with anything – whatever you want to do. Whatever's easy. So I went to work there – and I told 'em I was going to work – and I finished the job. But what happened was on the last day of the job – now I went to work Monday afternoon, and all the – I got all the timbers out. There was nothing done on this job. The painters had just finished painting it. They had to get it out by Friday night. Had to be out of there Friday night 'cause that was the deadline on it. And they put another guy with me. And it was a big barge. A hundred – a hundred and fifty feet long, and two sides and the ends, you know. All that had to be – all them sparks had to be cut, had to be milled – and we had to mill our own lumber there – you run your own mill through – and the guy helped me with a load of lumber. You had to pack it out there and put it – bore all them holes through it. Quite a little job. So – and then put a plug in the top of the hole, you know.

So he gave me all the bolts – a big box of bolts were given to me and – the holes were already burned through on the – all we had to do is drill up through the wood and then [unintelligible] board on the top and put a bolt down, put the plug in – make sure we didn't [unintelligible]. Anyway, we worked on it. Friday, the – I had one piece of foot on the end, Friday. One [spark?] was cut and bolted down and that was it. That was the end of the job. The boss was happy. He says, "The job don't go out until three o'clock and you'll have it done before lunchtime." I said, "Oh, sure." "Well, don't take your tools out on the job today" he says. "Don't take your tools out on the job." "What do you mean?" "Don't take those tools out on the job" "Go out on the job and do whatever you can out there. Finish the job up, if you can, but don't take your tools out there." "Well" I says – a fellow named Wiley was the boss there, the superintendent of the yard. He got fired later on in the year. "I got to get this timber in there." So I lifted it up and set it in. I had to drive with a head, see.

So I picked up a piece of four-by-four that was laying there and I was whacking it on the end to try to drive it up, and the superintendent came over just about that time. He says, "Red" – he knew me from the other yard – he said, "Red, why are you hitting it with – where's your T-Ball? Isn't that hard on the hand?" "Yeah, it is a little hard on the hand!" And he says, "Well, where's your T-Ball?" I says, "Over at the shop." Sounded like an idiot, though. He's asking where my T-Ball and I'm out on the job and my T-Ball in the shop. "Well, what is it doing in the shop?" he says. "Well" I say, "John – Red says not to bring the tools out here today. Doing the very best I can with no tools out here." "What do you mean no tools out here?" "Go talk to him, he's the foreman or boss." I say, "I'll get the timber in, don't worry about it, I'll get –" "Oh, I know you'll do that all right." "This has to be done this afternoon." I said, "It'll be done before lunchtime. As far as I am concerned." The paint is already painted all the way around there. They're waiting for me to put the last piece in to paint it. So I say, "Go talk to –" Well, he storms off the barge and I got the thing up into place and we're boarded off and finishing up the job and put – gotten the bolts in when Red comes back out to the job. He says, "Are you

finished?" I said, "Yeah, I'm finished." He says, "Okay" he says, "What is that all about?" He says, "Well" he says, "You don't know, you don't go down to the union hall anymore. You don't know what your union's doing." He said, "We asked for a ten cent raise and the boss won't give it to us. Crowley won't give you no raise."

HS: Now is Pacific Dry Dock at this time owned by Crowley?

RA: This is Crowley, Pacific Dry Dock.

HS: Pacific Dry Dock owned Crowley?

RA: Yeah, Crowley owned Pacific Dry Dock.

HS: Okay –

RA: Yeah, it belongs to Crowley.

HS: – okay.

RA: That's the yard for his tugboat. The old man put that yard there for his own tugboat. But we – when they – he didn't have any of his own tugs in there, he allowed 'em to take in other government work as long as it didn't interfere with his tugboat, see. So this was an Army boat that had sit on this barge. It had – putting it on dry dock, they painted it, and – it was off of dry dock down, running alongside the pier ready to go away.

So I said, "What's the story?" "Well" he says, "We asked for a ten-cent raise and they won't – Crowley won't give it to us." So he says, 'We asked him to pay us for the use of our tools. And we're putting out tools for his benefit and that's one way we can probably get him to give us a raise. We have to sharpen our saws our self, we have to buy our overalls our self. So we put that to the forum.' And he says, "We're furnishing tools besides our labor." And he said, "We told 'em – all right, now you won't give us a ten-cent raise across the board, we want ten cents for the use of our tools or we don't – we're still on the job and we won't use our tools. You can get the tools for us." Well, electric drills – the drills they did, you know. Some tools they – not our hand tools and overalls and like that.

So anyway – "Well, what are we going to do?" I say, "Well, they ought to come down the yard – knock off. We have no tools and no work." Well, then there was a big fight, was it a lock-out or a strike, see. So they were fighting it out between themselves. And I said, "Well, Red, I'm getting married tomorrow morning about lunchtime, twelve o'clock I'm getting married." I said, "I'm going on my honeymoon." So I said, "When – I'll see you next Monday when I get back. I'm going to someplace for a week. My wife-to-be has a week off." She works in the – she works at the [Palal] Soap Factory down in – in [Albraha] down on 27th and [Crowley]. She works down there. She's been there for

twenty-five years.

HS: And what was her job title at that time?

RA: Soap. They made soap – [Palal] – they put on the – to scrub the pots. And they make soap. All kinds of soap. Soap for shaving –

HS: Right. And what did she do? Her job was –?

RA: Well, she – she went to work – there was twenty-five girls when she went to work, put [Palal] into cans, took twenty-five girls to do it. One girl made the bottom, one girl made the top, another girl made the filler –

HS: So she worked on the line –

RA: On the line on this machine. So every year they would eliminate one girl. They had the girl that made the bottom and the tops – they eliminated the one that made the top and the one that made the bottom made the top and the bottom. So they eliminated a girl. Every year they eliminated a girl. By the time they got down to the – my wife was the last one left there – became my wife – she was the last one there. She pressed a button and the can rolled out the other end. So all she had to do was pick up the sheets – and then press a button and the machines went down the line and made all the soap and all the – there was one girl left there, a Portuguese girl, that done the typing, you know, where it was supposed to be shipped on the box, where it was supposed to be shipped to. So she had a vacation come – she had a week's vacation coming to her.

So I says, okay, so we – we got married – got married in the Catholic Church. My wife wasn't Catholic, she was Lutheran, but she never went to church anyway. So she – no interference on anything like that. We got married, went on our honeymoon. I took her all the way down to Mexico for our honeymoon. Went down – was on Highway 1 all the way down. We went to Monterey that night. Had no – we went to the church and got married. Her folks sat at one side, I sat on this side, she just had a little sailor outfit on. This is what you saw in the picture. I had a blue suit on. She's got a big bouquet in front. It was a hundred and five here in Oakland that day. We got married – the church was nice and cool, though. But we left the church, see, and we went over to Alameda and got our picture taken by ourselves. Brushed all the rice out of our hair, and we went over to – went down to Monterey. Stopped off in [San ?] and got a milkshake it was so damned hot. So we went on down to Monterey.

And we got down to Monterey and we rented a room in a motel with a car thing, you know. So I took her to get a dinner in Monterey and it was so damn foggy I couldn't find the road. I couldn't find nothing. I opened the door to find that damned white line to see if I was still on the road or not. And I didn't – I told her, "I'm a little bit nervous." I told her – I say, "I can't find the road, the pier, the nothing." And I say, "We're liable to run

off the end of the dock somewhere. I don't know where the hell I'm at." All of a sudden a red light came up and it said "EAT." She says, "I'm hungry, I haven't had anything to eat since breakfast, you know. Only a milkshake." I said, "Well, let's go in there – I don't know anyplace else to go. What I'm gonna do." "Well" I said, "You certainly married a great guy. "Oh, I'm in love with you. I don't care what it is." She got one of the best – she says one of the best steaks she ever had in her life. She got a big steak and apple pie and coffee and all. I had – something – whatever I had, hamburger steak and my teeth weren't too good – didn't like eating – steak was too tough for me [unintelligible]. Anyway, we found our way back to the room and we went on down to Mexico. Went to see my cousin in Los Angeles, Hollywood, went to see them. Come across the desert, up the mountains, and back home.

When I got back home, the strikes were still on. They lasted for nine months.

HS: Now wait a minute, let me just – let me turn this machine – tape over about the story.

**[End of Tape 4 – Side 7 (A) Part 7 of 10]
[Begin Tape 4 – Side 8 (B) Part 8 of 10]**

Editor's note: there are significant audio issues starting with part 8 of the recordings, and large gaps of the recording are unintelligible. Dialogue was transcribed where possible.

HS: Okay, let me just – the strike goes on for nine months?

RA: It lasted nine months. Well, when I came back, I went down to see what they were going to do. And I went down to the union hall to see what was going on. And they said there was a – I came in – and I fooled around – I think it was on a Thursday – I fooled around a couple of days. I went back to Pacific Dry Dock, you know, on a Monday and they said the strike was still on. I went home and told my wife – well, she had to get back to work. I took her to work to the soap factory. And had still some other little – go out to my mother's. She wanted to go see her mother that night, you know. We had just got home. Her sister was in the hospital, so we went to see her, you know.

Three or four days went just like that, you know. So I went down to the union hall on a Thursday morning to see what – the following week to see what was going on. And I was standing there talking that day. Martinolli had moved over from San Francisco – Bob Martinolli was a great boat builder and [unintelligible] sailors and stuff like that. Very, very good. They'd come down from Seattle. There was Tony Martinolli and the father had a big shipyard up in Seattle. And he had a yard in San Francisco, at Mission Rock. So he was going to build a Mission Pier, so he had to get out of there. There was a rock out there called Mission – Mission Rock. Well, they built the pier up – right out – and took

care of that rock so that rock didn't – don't interfere with shipping anymore. So – the rock is under the pier now.

Anyway, he moved over and he took Hurley's old yard over. It was Hurley during the war. And it was originally – General Engineering – General had two yards. It had one in Alameda down by the bridge and it had one on – by the estuary there on – where the lake comes out there. That was – had a big dry dock in there. A big marine dry dock. Well, the navy come in there during the war. They put a floating dry dock in there and new buildings up and new cafeteria and everything in there, so Bob was able to get it rented. He rented it and opened up a big shipyard, taking care of bigger boats, you know.

So, he had a boat in there that had a – a – coast survey boat, a boat with a glass bottom in it. They were going somewhere and they wanted to watch something under the water and have a glass-bottomed boat. And they wanted – some good padding, you know – keels. Good keels – the keel would – and the windows were on the side or someplace. Well, they – there was a house guy running – name was Scotty – he was running the carpenter's shop and he didn't know one bolt from another, you know, but he was running the carpenter's shop. So he came over from San Francisco. And he had a couple of other boat builders with him. A bunch of old guys working in the yard – can't remember their names now. They're all dead and gone now anyway. They – they came over and he was with Martinolli. And they called for a shipwright. They wanted a shipwright. And they said, well, there was no shipwright in the yard, they're all out someplace.

Well, I don't know whether there was a strike, or where they're at, I don't know, but there was nobody in the hall. Well, I had to have one today. They had to get the boat finished and had to go out by – another one of them Friday night deals. So they said, "There's no shipwright in here." "We haven't got – nobody's there?" "Well," he says, "I got a boat builder here." And he says, "Well, we don't want a boat builder, we want a shipwright." "Well, a boat builder's better than a shipwright" the guy says – the union guy says. "A boat builder is way beyond a shipwright." "Well, does he want to come? Can he do what we want to do?" "He can do anything you want him to do. A boat builder can do – if he's – anything in the shipyard, a boat, he's the one you want. This guy over there, he don't know his bum from a boat – looks back and puts a part in – starboard" he says. So, I mean, he's had trouble with him before. But he says, "Would you mind going over as a shipwright for one day? It's a one-day job." So I said, "Okay, I'll take it."

So I went over to Martinolli's. It was right on 5th Avenue right there, right in the – right where the lake comes into the – there's a park on that side – now there's a lumber company – Sunset Lumber Company on that side – but now – big place. Dry dock – they got some big ships in there. So I go over there and I – "Take your tools" he said. "Oh, my tools are in the car." "Well," he says, "they'll give you dollars over moving your tools." They're supposed to do that. They're supposed to come and pick 'em up. If you take 'em in yourself, they're supposed to pay you for that. "Don't worry about that." "No, you got to collect it." "Okay, I'll collect it." I go over there. On top of my toolbox, I had – my

housefly – it's like a – a T, the letter T. Singlefly – and I put an A in the middle of it. Alexander Transport Line. That's my housefly for all my ships. And I found it on top of my toolbox, I carted it in there and painted it. Looks nice. I'll show you downstairs.

So anyway, I go and take my tools over and I meet the guy, and they send a guy out to take my tools out of my car for me and bring it into the shop. And the guy, Scotty, comes to me and says, "I think – you're a ship builder – I don't understand." But he says, "What we got here – we've got a glass-bottom boat and we got to put a keel on the steel beam." They have a steel beam so the boat won't rest on that steel cable, it will come down around the boat. The boat's got a lot of shakiness [unintelligible]. "Oh, that's nothing," I says. "It's got to be done tonight or tomorrow, you know." The boat goes away tomorrow. [Unintelligible]. "Here's the timber." They bought the – they had the timber there. It was about four-by-eight, I think they had there, four-by-eight. And I said, "Okay." "Get a guy to help you." So they gave me someone to help me.

I went down and I took a template. "Got some plywood around here?" "Yeah, I got some plywood." So I took the plywood down and I made a template of the bottom of the boat. They're getting fidgety. "Oh, what are you doing? You're making a template or something down there? Let me ask –" The superintendent – the boss – Bob Martinolli, came down there and said, "Well, are you getting that job done?" He said, "Yeah, he's started making –" "Don't waste so much time. Get a timber over that boat," you know. So I get it back up and laid the timber on the – and cut it, hung the – a guy helped me – and we cut the shape in it and we cleaned it all up for him nice. "Now," I says, "the only thing we got to do, we got to take it down and see if it's [unintelligible] timber and see if the boat will fit in it, you know, see if I got it right." Well, okay, so we haul it down to the ship and put it on the thing and then a crane picked the boat up and brought the crane down so an inspector boat could come and look at it. We didn't bolt it in – find out if it fit 'cause it would have to have leather put along the top of the padding and then afterwards we have to put the bolts.

So went down and took a look at it. Well, the inspector come and looked at it. He says, "No, you're fine, you got a perfect fit," he says. "Fitted perfect," he says. "When the leather goes on it will be perfect." But he says, "You're about a quarter inch high. Can you take a quarter inch off it?" he says. "Yeah, nothing to it." So we lift – lift the boat up and we put it back – had to walk way up to the mill. "Where are you going to run?" "I have to run over to the joiner. We'll take a quarter inch off of it." Get the joiner to take about a quarter-inch cut, and I went – they pushed open the door and the damn table dropped on it and they took a cut about eighteen inches in, almost three-eighths of an inch or more than a three-eighths of an inch cut. "Holy smoke, what in the hell have we done now?" "Boys, I forgot to tell you that cable has a hinge that'll drop on you. When you crank it down, you're supposed to turn it back. The gears are wore out in it." It's an old piece of machinery. "Well, that's a fine time to tell me now!"

I said, "Well, the only thing we can do now," I say, "is run it right on through." We got a

hell of a cut in it now. Just run it on through. I said “Take it down see how much it’s out of line then we’ll have to put a shim under it now.” I’ll get a redwood shear or something underneath it. So we take it down, take it back down to the ship. I was scared to death. God. First time I come to a new yard and then make a botch like that. I kept saying to myself, “No, it’s not my fault. They should have told me,” you know. Scotty hit me on the dock going down. I told Scotty, I said, “Are you finished with the ship this time?” I said, “Well, I don’t know. The guy didn’t tell me the table.” “Oh, I forgot to tell you the cable drops on you. Well, it’s not your fault. Go ahead and see what it does.” So I took it down and put it on the ship and the crane come down with the boat [unintelligible]. Had to wait about an hour to get this – crane was off doing something else [unintelligible] – and all the time I was nervous, you know. I says, “I will mark where the bolts are,” you know. So we can use the timber. We’re going to have to cut timber no matter what. We’ll have to put a shim underneath it.

So they put the boat down, [unintelligible] put it on the shore. “Perfect – passes 100%!” said I. So anyway, I was happy as a lark. So they put the boat away, we bolted it down. [unintelligible] So I said “well, did you put the leather on it.” [unintelligible] The bolts were all in. Boy, I had it done before 2 o’clock. Wasn’t a hell of a job was it, you just cut a shape, and then make one boot closet, then put it back down, put the bolts in it. Only three or four bolts to hold it down. So they brought the leather down. So the other fella and I, we each took one side of the boat, and we patched the leather on it. A little padding underneath.

HS: Why do you put the leather on? What is the purpose –

RA: Well, so it don’t bump against the hard wood. So it’s got a little extra padding. A little cushion. The boat vibrates, you know. All those boats have padding – padding to make it better. [unintelligible] in the salt water. [unintelligible] There’s copper tacks you put in it. [unintelligible] It’s only about 18 foot long.

HS: So you said you could do this too.

RA: Well we did all that. I mean, boat job, you know. I mean there’s lead around all the joints – flashing, it’s called. One tack after another. Just sit there driving tack boat. That’s [unintelligible] you just sit there, driving tacking on canvas. Laying canvas deck where you tack every half inch. All the way across the deck. A lot of them, sitting there driving tack jabbing away with the guys about their wives and girlfriends, working all along. That’s the thing about being a boat builder, you know.

But anyways, we got it finished that night. Guy says, “I talked to the boss, the owner, Bob, you stay tomorrow. You’re gonna work tomorrow.” So I says “okay.” Well next day come, I don’t know what the hell – [unintelligible] -- So I was there – [unintelligible]

HS: Oh really? Meanwhile what happens with the drydeck? With Crowley?

RA: Crowley, they –

HS: They don't strike?

RA: They settled. I never went back to them. I had my tools out of there, I never went back.

HS: So you accidentally worked for Crowley for that relatively short period of time?

RA: For one week.

HS: Only one week.

RA: I told Martinolli I gotta get the job done, and he says “okay, keep it.”

HS: You ever know what happened with that strike?

RA: Well, the strike got over, 9 months later. But he [Martinolli] was payin' for the tools. So he was exempt from the strike. And I was getting tool money. I was getting' 10 cents an hour, that's 80 cents a day more, on my salary, see.

HS: You were getting the tool money on the new job?

RA: On the new job, I was getting tool money. He settled with the union. Why would I go back to Crowley, when they never did settle the tool money. They never did settle it. I went back there after, and I never did get the tool money. And I was getting it.

HS: What was the name of the company, this new...?

RA: Martinolli.

HS: Oh, that's right. And where was it located?

RA: Fifth Avenue. [unintelligible] Right on the Embarcadero. Right where the lake – where you cross over the lake, that little canal. By Lake Merritt. Right on that corner. The buildings are still there now, they took the dry dock away, but the buildings are still there. They're going to tear them down, I think. All the shipyards are gone now.

HS: So from 1950 to 1953, you –

RA: Yeah, I was there from '53. Well the strike got over within 9 months. But I stayed down with Martinolli, and I had one of the best jobs I ever had in my life! Summertime he'd bring his boy down there – his wife had cancer of the throat, and she was in the hospital, one thing or another – he'd bring his boy, about 9 years old, when he was out of

school, they'd bring him down there and I'd build [unintelligible]. I'd build electric trains, tunnels and bridges for him up in the loft, for his trains, and I'd get my salary. And I'd also get to work on the ships out there, you know. I had a wonderful job there, you know. [unintelligible] My salary was good, pay was good.

Finally they found out I could put a ship on the dry dock. They had an old guy come in to put a ship on the dry dock, from Bethlehem. And he took a liking to me, had me come down to be his assistant. So he said "you know how to put a ship on?" I said, "yeah I been putting all them boats on dry dock down at Cryer's." [unintelligible] Now this is a floating dry dock. A little different. So he told me how to run the dry dock, and if I was dumb about the thing he'd tell me all about how to run the dry dock, how he built the block for this ship. There were some pretty good size boats [unintelligible] that can take up to a 300 foot ship up on that dock. It was an old Navy block, built for destroyers...destroyers and submarines, stuff like that.

So anyways, he lived over in Tiburon. And sometimes he wouldn't come over – he didn't feel good, he was an old man, retired. They'd say, "so Red'll run the dock for you." So I'd put the boat on dry dock – I put a lot of ships – I put the Magnolia, the Willows on dry dock. Many, many more ships I put on the dock for him.

HS: What were those two ships – the Magnolia, the Willows?

RA: They were Coast Guard. Buoy tenders, they went out and tended the buoys. They had been Army boats at one time. They were mine layers. The Navy took them over after the war and made buoy tenders out of them, they'd pick up the buoys.

HS: Alright Red, one technical distinction that I'd like you to expand on just the tiniest bit – you refer to a boat builder as being a more skilled craftsman than a shipwright. How do you define shipwright and boat builder? Can you define them briefly?

RA: You might as well say there are three categories: shipwrights, joiners, and boat builders. That's what it says on the card: shipwrights, joiners, and boat builders. The shipwright is the one who lays down the wave, the big heavy timbers on the ship. He does anything really rough and heavy, like build [unintelligible]. Shoring up the ship. Anything like that – rough, heavy work.

The joiner – you know what the joiner does – he's the one who puts the bunks in the ship, all the fancy work, the doors, the portholes, stuff like that inside the ship. He does all that – the bunks [unintelligible].

HS: How does the word joiner come into it?

RA: That's when they put the bunk in the boat – it all has to be made out of wood, they have

to be able to saw the joints, make all that stuff. They don't make it like a shipwright - shipwright, if he has a half-inch gap in something, doesn't make a difference to him down under the ship there, just drive a wedge into it if it don't fit just right. Joiner has to have the joints - you can't see the joints - you gotta be able to put that together, nice, polish it down, sand it. All cleaned up. The doors have to fit just right. Can't be no half-assed job when the inspector comes along, them doors have to be just so on the ship.

Then the boat builder comes in between all of them. He's the one that does it all. You're working a boat job, when I worked at Cryer's there were six of us. And I was the sixth. Each one of us was doing a different trade. One guy, he was an excellent painter - he was a boat builder - but he was very good at painting. So he did all the painting, but yet he's a boat builder. When you need him, he comes over and helps you, now you go over and help him when he got an extra paint job, you pick up your sandpaper and sand it, or help him paint! I always say you paint the enamel, I'll paint the bottom. I hate painting the enamel because it kinda pulls on you, you know. So I say you paint the enamel, I'll paint the bottom. Put the green in the waterline.

Anyway, when the electrical work had to be done, I'd work with the carpenter - but he'd do very good electrical work, and he'd put all the electrical work in the boat we're building. [unintelligible] Fish boats for the big fish companies. We'd lay the keel, bent the frame, put the planks on, we were all boat builders. Now the boat has to be finished out, all the machinery has to go in the boat, the electrical work has to go into the boat. The joiner would have to go on the boat. So we all pitch in and do that. One guy is very good at the machine work, he knows how to line an engine, put it in the boat, the shaft [unintelligible]. One of the other carpenters go help him. I put a shim under the engine [unintelligible]. I took care of the cording and the rigging. I learned to splice the cable, so I'd splice the cable for him, put the rigging on the mast, when it's time for that to be done. I could put the other things on. But they always hired a carpenter to come in and do the big job. I could do the small carpenter jobs. [unintelligible] I had all the tools and the ability.

So that's where the boat builder come in. He'd come into a small shop. Now for example, they had a coast guard boat, where all there was a bar out there, and a lightbulb got jammed in between the [pothouse?] and the smokestack. And they went into Moore shipyards down there, and they want to get the boat out of there, had to get it out between - and they was about ready to take an axe and chop it out, and the captain said "Oh no no no! That's a good boat! You get a boat man here, he'd take that boat out and get it out of there without you smashing it up."

"So how we gonna get a boat builder, no boat builders in the shipyards, they're all shipwrights and jointers. What do they know, they don't know how to go about getting that boat out of there. So we'll go down to a boat yard, get a boat builder to come up here."

So they called down to where I was working at the time - I was working at Cryer's at that

time – so they sent me down to the [unintelligible] shipyards, see if I could get the boat out. Hell yeah. [unintelligible] Took the tools out, able to spring it up enough to get the boat out. And they were gonna take an axe in there to get it out. So that's really the difference between the trades, see.

HS: In the hall, do they have like a board for the shipwrights, a board for the joiners –

RA: Yeah, they have a speaker. We need five shipwrights per yard. We need five joiners per yard. Very similar to when a boat builder gets called up. [unintelligible] They have jobs – they never left the job. Boat builder [unintelligible] more than 50 years in the one job – they never left it! See, they wouldn't go in to work in the big shipyard, they didn't like it, and I didn't like it either, I hated the big yard. I went down to take that boat off – I went to go up, to take a look at it the night before, and I sized up the gangway at about ten after four, they blew the whistle, and [unintelligible] and I turned around and run the other way! They'd be unloading on the gangway. You go down to Moore shipyards there'd be men standing around the corners, hiding you know round the corners and stuff. Hell, I'd never go on a Moore boat job.

So anyway, I worked there. And one day, Bob comes to me and says, "I know it seems to be getting bad, we've lost a lot of bids." We'd done a lot of work. We'd put a lot of ships back in mothballs after the Korean War – the Korean War came along – and we put a lot of ships back into mothballs, put up the [unintelligible], did a lot of work like that. I think we had nine, ten ships we put away into mothballs. And then we had to clean them all out, take the rigging all down, [unintelligible]. You know, I took the rigging down off all the cables, you know you get them down below.

Now here on the boat tiller I'm taking 30 year old cables, covered in grease. About twenty after four, ten after four, I'm starting to wash my hands up on the deck to get some of the grease off, and Bob says "Hey! You're washing your hands on my time!" Bob – he's the big boss – comes by. I turn around and I say, "yeah, and I got them dirty on your time too." Well he would laugh and go on, you know. They'd say, "You talk to the boss like that?" I'd say, "Yeah, what the hell. He knows me. Well situated here, you know." Yeah, I got them dirty on your time too. Why would I wash them on my time? Wash them on your time. Just standing there doing nothing anyways, waiting for the whistle to blow.

So anyways, Bob came to me – well, I knew things were getting bad lately, most all of the guys were gone. Couldn't figure what was going on. Putting no work in. So Bob called me into the office one day, he said, "Red, I wanna tell you..." He says, "Put the dry dock down level today. Put all the blocks level. Clean everything off – all the extra blocks off the dock. Close up all the valves and everything, make sure they're locked, because I'm out of business as of today. I've gone broke. I'm \$152,000 in the hole – I've lost my home, I've lost everything." He says, "I lost my wife – got caught playing around." He was playing around with one of his secretaries, didn't think his wife was

watching. Didn't let the boy come down to the pier anymore. So he was in a big mess.

So he says, "What to do is put the dock down. You know there haven't been any boats shipped in here for weeks now," he says. And men have been going bye, one by one, even the bosses were going one by one, the ships went, this one went, that one went. All that was left there was I think myself, one of the carpenters, one carpenter boss, one welder boss. That was all that was left. Everyone else was gone. So I said, "I'm sorry to hear that happened, Bob." I said "I hate to hear that you lost the yard." He says, "Yeah I just lost one bit after another. [unintelligible] They're out to get me. They want me out of here. I know they been out to get me."

HS: Why do they want to get him?

RA: Well, cut down the competition. Nothing bad, you know. The big yards – they closed down Alameda. General Engineering, that was closed down. Richmond yard was closed down. Cut it down to nothing. Whatever was left, Bethlehem and Moore – they're squeezing the bids.

HS: Yeah, I see.

RA: They spy on one another. They know what's going on. And they squeeze the bid down. Squeeze 'em out.

HS: Yeah, right. It's about 1953?

RA: It's about 1953. Now I'd already had one daughter, and another daughter coming. So I hate to lose the job when I had you know, another daughter coming. Another child coming – I had one daughter. Beautiful little girl. When I got married, my wife said to me – we'd only been married about – oh let's see, we got married in August – I think it was in November, she says to me, "I went to the doctor today." I said, "Oh? I hope nothing's wrong." She says, "I got good news for you. You're gonna be a daddy for Christmas. I got you a Christmas present, for Daddy." I says, "Okay, now I'm gonna give you a Christmas present." I say, "At the first of the year you quit. You don't work anymore. You stay home and take care of the kids." She goes, "Oh, and I got other news for you. The company went broke! The soap factory closed down. I don't have a job anymore after the first of the year." I said, "Well that's good then. You don't have to quit then." "You bring your car down, we'll load it up with soap," she says. "We'll have enough soap to go for the next twenty years. They said I could have all the soap I wanted."

So anyway, took the car over with soap up to her mother's house, I took the car over to her sister's, took the car over to her brother's." [Both RA and HS laughing] "Soap was just leftover, you know. Bar soap, hand soap, you know that [Pow wow?]."

HS: What was this soap company's name, I think you mentioned it earlier, but –

RA: [Pow wow].

Editor's note: in the recording this soap company's name sounds like Pow Wow, and is referred to as such from this point on.

HS: Pow Wow.

RA: Pow Wow soap. It was owned by a doctor – owned it.

HS: I see.

RA: That one outfit, over in Berkeley, what was it called –

HS: Colgate?

RA: Colgate! They bought him out.

HS: Oh, Colgate bought him out. Who was that, I'm not very familiar with –

RA: [Talking at the same time as HS] Everything was the same! Ship yards, boat yards, I don't care what they are, they buy one another, they go out of business. Competition, you know.

So anyway, I come home, I tell my wife, I sat down and I said, "I lost one of the best jobs that I ever had in my life. Three years or more. [unintelligible] man I ever worked for. No ire, no fuss, no nothing." I was surprised – thinking I'm going to have to go out looking again, find another one, another job. Well, the phone rang. The wife says, "Oh, don't worry about it, you'll get another job. We've had a good life. We've put money in the bank. We own our own home now." We bought the home – I owned the home, the home was mine, you know, nothing to worry about. That little baby will be on the way pretty soon. So it'll all be paid for – [unintelligible] paid my bills right off.

So anyways, phone rang, it was Bob Martinolli on the phone. He says, "There's a ship sinking. Carved up boat, going down sinking. Go down and do whatever you can to get the dock down, put the boat in, they want to beach the boat, they can't find any place to beach it, the [unintelligible] is standing outside pumping it, and they [unintelligible] to pump it out, so they want it on the deck. [unintelligible] just set it on the dock, don't fill any boxes or anything. Just keep it from sinking in the bay. "Well, okay, [unintelligible] do it on your own. I'll get as many [unintelligible] as I can." So I went down, got hold of [unintelligible] to run the dock – Larry, the guy who owned the dock, he lived there. And they only had one welder.

So, when you open the valve on that side – “you know how to open it?” “Oh, I know how to open it.” So I said, “I’ll open it on this side.” There’s four valves you have to turn. Valves – down under the dock. You have to open these big valves to let the water in. [unintelligible] opening the valves – all these switches down there. Now see, that’s just a [clock?] when I got called back down there – and the [boatman?] outside had to throw water on the – and the fireboat is pumping water out there like crazy, you know. A little [unintelligible]. I said “Well, let’s put a couple blocks on. Round cap. We’re bound to catch it on the keel. [unintelligible] It’s got a bad leak in it – I don’t know where the leak is, but a leak always [unintelligible].” So he says “Okay.” So we put a couple caps on it – that’s the round blocks [unintelligible]. They put the dock down. Brought the boat in, tied it off. Brought the boat[?] outside – 7:30, they had to close it back up. You know it’s summertime, it’s still light. They had the boat back up on the dry dock, perfect fit, the blocks fit perfect.

Just lucky to have [unintelligible] screwdriver, right between the two keel blocks. Perfect place for him to get under, [unintelligible] he starts welding. Well, they weld the whole thing up. I laid down some paint, put some paint on it. The fire boat went away. They put the boat back down in the water, the guy [unintelligible], he starts shaking my hand and he says, “Well, you did a good job, you saved the boat,” and everything like that. He was running onions from South America – running onions up. So he went away.

I raised the dock back up, took the two caps off, closed all the valves, and I was tired. [unintelligible] the valves – just turn that crank [unintelligible]. I got home around midnight. And I said to my wife – we were laying in bed, “I’m so tired – I don’t know what to do. Bob is such a good guy. He’ll never pay me – he’s broke. He’ll never pay me. I did that for him,” I said. “I would have done anything for him, he was so good to me.” “Well don’t worry about it, get some sleep.” I woke up the next morning, I said “What am I going to do now? I guess I’ll go back down, see the civic dry dock again.” I mean, go down and see the union hall, see what they say.

I went down to the union hall, they say, “Hey Red! Glad you came in. They’re asking for you up at the civic dry dock. Want to go back up there to work?” “Sure,” I said. I went back up to the civic dry dock, I said, “You want me back?” “Certainly, we want you back. Come on in, go to work.” [unintelligible]

HS: We cut it? We’re at the end of this tape -

[End of Tape 4 – Side 8 (B) Part 8 of 10]

[Begin Tape 5 – Side 9 (A) Part 9 of 10]

HS: This is side 9. Um, okay, so you go back to –

RA: I went back to Pacific Dry Dock. They're glad to have me back. Had a [unintelligible] in there – [unintelligible] back to the rudder. So they put me doing that. I worked with a couple of guys. [unintelligible] "How are you doing down there in the yard?" [unintelligible] what I was doing all these years. [unintelligible]

The superintendent of the yard, he comes down, and he says, "Red, I understand you worked for Bob Martinolli." I said, "Yeah, I was there for three years, down there." He says, "Do you know how to run that dry dock?" I said, "Yeah, I know how to run it. Yeah, [unintelligible]." Well, he says, "They're taking the yard over. They're taking it over." He says it's going to have his name on it for a while, but we'll finish it [unintelligible] have his name on it for a while. They're taking it over.

He says, "You know anything about that? [unintelligible] They don't know where the valves are, they don't know how to run the dry dock, they don't know nothing. All his [Martinolli's] men are gone. He's gone. He won't do anything for us. We can't get a hold of him. He's gone." So they're taking over his debt. [unintelligible] don't know how much money. They said, "We're taking over [unintelligible] Lumber Company." You had lumber down there. You bought lumber. [unintelligible] Over \$4000 worth of lumber. He bought for you 'cause you never paid the bill. What we do, we call up the lumber company, we say "Hey, we're taking this business over. We're giving you \$2000 [unintelligible] or you don't get nothing." Said "Yeah, I'll take \$2000." Did that with everybody. Did that with the [unintelligible]. Paid so much on the dollar. They wouldn't pay the whole bill. They had \$4000 in lumber for \$2000. Write the bill off. [unintelligible] went into business with him. Couldn't find anymore – [unintelligible]. Had to go get the lumber out on Pacific Dry Dock, see.

But anyways, I went down. He says, "How many men do you need?" I said, "Well, I'll just do all the talking. They all know me, I know them, and I'll just [unintelligible]." Four men, four carpenters. Two braced wind walls. Worked out very wonderfully. [unintelligible] And I run the dry dock, and us four – five of us, [unintelligible] two and two. So I took them down – took them down to the shore, showed them what to do – "here, turn these valves." [unintelligible] Down there for twenty minutes, turning these valves. "Oh yeah, [unintelligible] did a wonderful job, didn't you." "Well, we're making dock men out of you." "We don't want to be dock men, we want to be carpenters." "Oh, you're dock men now."

So I went down – I showed them how to put the dock down. We put it down in the water. He says, "Now bring it up," and we brought it up. Then – [unintelligible] – old man Crowley's on the dock [unintelligible]...watching what I'm doing, see. Well, they had a barge there, and it had all the machinery. Martinolli had it – had his own machine, but then [unintelligible] had a barge that went with the dry dock, had all the machines on it – table saw, all that stuff up on the barge. [unintelligible] Martinolli [unintelligible]

dry dock, had it three years. [unintelligible] So they said, “You put that barge on dry dock?” I said, “Sure.” Brought a – tugboat, from Pacific dry dock came down, they brought the boat around, they pulled it in, and put it on the [unintelligible].

We laid it out. He said, “Oh, you did a beautiful job. Everything’s fine.” Then he said, “Would you like to stay here? Run this dry dock for us?” Well, I should’ve said no, but, well, I’d been used to that place, I liked it, you know. I said, “Well, okay.” He said, “Then you’re a - make you a leaderman. Don’t make you a foreman, make you a leaderman.” I says, “Well – “. He says, “It’s 25 cents an hour more.” So I said [unintelligible]. They had [unintelligible] shipwrights too. [unintelligible] Charging the labor. Well, that was a silly thing on my part, I should have been tougher on them. I should have said, “Hey no!” If I’m at the dry dock – if I’m going to be the dockmaster on this thing, I’m getting more money.

HS: Why should you have said no? Maybe I’m getting –

RA: Well, I’m looking for a nice job, a steady place, to be happy with everybody. I’m not looking for a big – if they demand more money, they demand more out of you.

HS: Yeah, right.

RA: [unintelligible] You make a mistake somewhere, [unintelligible] they’ll come and can you so quick.

HS: Yeah, okay.

RA: [unintelligible] I said, “That’s a little insurance on your part.”

HS: Right. But also you said, you know, that they wanted you to stay there, and you said you should have said no. Are you saying –

RA: I should’ve. In the long run, I should’ve found out what I’d gotten myself into.

HS: Uh huh. Because you got yourself into a bigger –

RA: I’d gotten myself into too many – I got bawled out too many times! After a month went by, fine. Got taken [unintelligible]. And I get phone calls. “Red Alexander, phone!” [unintelligible] “They’re not doing anything.” “Well, I can’t be up here with the carpenters and down there with the laborers.”

HS: I see.

RA: So I had carpenters here doing a job, laborers down there doing a job, I had dry dock block men down there doing the dry dock. And they were goofing off someplace else.

So I went up I told him, "Hey listen." I said, "You gotta do something different. You keep bawling me out all the time. You get somebody else to run them laborers. I can't run them laborers. I can handle the dry dock – I can handle all them, then. I'm not going to handle all them [unintelligible, racial slurs]. I don't want anything to do with them people." He says, "Okay, I'll get another foreman. Make a laborer's block, then." So I said to myself, this isn't worth what I'm getting. I'm getting gypped all over. [unintelligible]

I went onto... [mumbling, unintelligible] We'd almost finished the 50s...

HS: You finished the 50's during this work?

RA: Yeah...then the 60's came along. '53...it was '63, still there, '63. The Machinists pulled a strike! The Machinists pulled a strike. And the Machinists went out. So they locked us down. I was locked out from the dock. They told me not to go in. [unintelligible] The union said I was a foreman, I could stay in if – I didn't want to stay in and be on the outside. I said, "No, I'll go out too."

So I went down – I'd been meaning to get a job at [Stowe's?]. I went back to Stowe – to work at Stowe's. I wouldn't go to Cryer's, but I went to Stowe's. I helped them build a boat – big sailboat over there. And I stayed over there...over a year. The strike got settled...they never sent for me to come back. I never heard from 'em. So I stayed at Stowe's.

And finally! [mumbling] And then Stowe's finished the boat. And he laid me off. And uh...then they laid me off, I went back...he laid me off because he finished the boat. Well, I went down to the hall – there was a job out of Richmond. I went out to Richmond, and uh...well I told – I told them out at the Pacific dry dock, what Martinolli told them – he took over - I says, "I want my time – what you people [unintelligible]. I worked for Martinolli and I want my time, you know, [unintelligible] time." So anyway, I went up and they had a landing barge job and I was only back about three weeks. I went out there, when I came back... [unintelligible] I went back to the city dry dock again. Yeah, I was out at the union hall and they say, "Hey!" They want me to stay out at Richmond. And I say "No, it's too far to go." I'd been living here – I'd been in a house up on Parson Court. And I drove all the way to Richmond to work. [unintelligible] Lot of overtime. [unintelligible] "Getting older, and I want you to be home with me and the girls, you know." The girls are getting big now, they're getting 14, 15. "I want you to stay home with me and the girls." Never mind, that's all the time.

So I went back, and they said "Yeah, the Pacific dry dock will like to have you, they got a big yacht in there. So I went back..." [Laughing]

HS: Is that when you got your...when you got your, um...your time in towards your pension?

RA: No, not quite yet. Well, they agreed all along, the time I was back. I told 'em when I came back again, they said, "No you never..." I said, "How 'bout – I go back, when I've been with you all these years..." "Yeah, you never left us," they said. "Never left us!"

HS: [Laughing] Okay.

RA: "So your time goes on from 1950 – 1950, you've been with us." Because a lot of guys do that, they go to another job, they come back, you know. And they give them their time, after all the time they've been there, you know. I know some of the Machinists have quit, then went back to some other place, come back, and they got their pensions, they got their same clock given to them and everything.

HS: So this is the 60's. This is the 60's, then?

RA: This isn't back, we're not in the 60's. No, no this isn't back in the 60's. We're going into the – yeah, we're in the – we're going into the 70's, now. The years go by so quick, [unintelligible], payment plan. I never went back to the other yard, they closed out the carpenter's shop – after I didn't come back, they closed out the carpenter's shop – Martinolli, and the carpenters at the Pacific Dry Dock do the work down there.

So I went – when they called me back, I went to the Pacific Dry Dock, and then they sent me down there on the truck. I take the truck and go down, and I run the job down there, you know. Put me back leaderman again, and I'd run the job down there, but always worked out at Pacific Dry Dock. So anyways, they uh, they had a big yacht in there, gone through the – Hawaiian company. And we had to put all – they'd been building [unintelligible]. And everything was backwards on it. The valves all put on backwards [unintelligible]. Yeah, we built that whole thing, don't know how much money they spent on it. [unintelligible] The Hawaiian company. And then they gave it to the Navy. Big write-off. It went back to [unintelligible]. Big yacht. I got pictures of it. Big, big thing. I worked on that thing up in the rigging, all kinds of things.

Anyways, I stayed with them there – let's see, when was it...19...I guess it was 70, 1970. [unintelligible] had retired. And they wanted me to take his job over. And I said no, I didn't want it. I was perfectly happy where I was. Red [not referring to himself] had retired...in 1970...Red was retiring, "they want you to take his job." I said, "No I don't want it. Get somebody else to take it, I don't want to be a foreman no more." They said, "Well, we don't want you to be a foreman, you'll be the head of the job. Head of the carpenter shop."

[unintelligible] They said, “You know how to run all the machines there, you’ve been with Red for 20 years, you’ll know how to run it.” I said, “No, I don’t want it. Don’t want no part of it.” So they said, “Well, think it over.” So I said, “Don’t think there’s much to think over.”

So that night [unintelligible] called out. [unintelligible] retired, [unintelligible] Monday morning I’m there – through Monday, you see. First Monday I’m there he’s having a big party, I got a picture over on my desk over there, the party he had. I’ll show it to you. And, uh –

[Pause in the recording]

HS: Okay, so um...

RA: That was a nice – they had a party for these two guys, who retired, you know.

HS: Red [sounds like Done], he was the boss?

RA: I took his place.

HS: Yeah.

RA: But, I went the next day, and they told me that’s right, at the party. My wife is with me. At the party. And I went to get my picture taken. And they told me, “You’re going to take Red’s place tomorrow.”

HS: Even though you didn’t really want to.

RA: No, I didn’t want to. That was a Friday night. Monday morning I was to take Red [Done’s?] place. And I told them I didn’t want it. So I went Monday morning and I just sat down on the job. They said, “We got some men down there, go [unintelligible].” I said, “No, I don’t tell them nothing, I’m not the boss.” They said, “You’re the boss!” And I said, “No I’m not.” “Well, we’ll talk it over,” they say. So Joe comes up to me – you know, guy I’ve known for years, he was our superintendent over there – and he says to me, “Guys that don’t wanna be a boss make the best boss.” And I says, “Well I tell you one thing right here and now – I worked for you people for too many years down at the other yard as a leaderman. Now Red [Done] was a foreman. If I’m good enough to take his job, I’m good enough to take his pay too.” I said, “To hell with this leaderman. To run all this yard, this dry dock and everything. I’m not asking – first time I’ve ever asked for anything for myself. This is the first time.” “Oh, I don’t know about that,” they said. “Well then you can forget about it,” I said. “All I want – I’ve got my wife to take care of, I got many more years to go...” That was back in 1970. Then I was only...

HS: 55-ish.

RA: 55...almost to my 60's. I'm 80 now!

HS: But this was 1970. And you were born in 1916.

RA: Yeah.

HS: So you were 56 or something.

RA: Yeah, about 56.

HS: 55-ish.

RA: I was, uh –

HS: And you retired in 1980.

RA: I was 74, something like that. [Laughing] I mean 64.

HS: 64. So you'd have been about 54. At the time we're talking about.

RA: I'm getting a little ahead of myself.

HS: Yeah.

RA: Anyways, they said "Oh I'll let you know, see." And I said, "Well you better let me know today [unintelligible], I won't touch anything." I said, "All I want is the job, I don't want the responsibility." [unintelligible] Nerve-racking, on that damn dry dock. They took the dry dock [unintelligible] away from me, and they took another fellow on the dry dock down to the other yard, 'cause I wasn't pushing hard enough on the men, see, I was easy on the men. Oh, all the men liked me, I got along fine with all the men. They put another fellow on the dry dock, and he got ulcers from it and he died right on the dry dock. Leon Gull. They had several dock men after that, and they wanted me to go back and take it over, and I said "No way!" Too much responsibility. The ships are getting harder to put on the dock, they're getting fancier bottoms, I said I don't want to do it. That's when I went down to the other yard.

But anyway, they had a ring – a two ring wave there, on the [unintelligible]. So I go out and help, you know, I go out and help on the dry dock next to the men on the dock. Let them be their own dock men, I don't want nothing to do with it. So they said, "Okay Red, we'll let you know." On the way out – that night going

out the gate, the guy says to me, [unintelligible]. That was Monday. Monday night. They said to me, "Are you going to get the job?" And I said, "I don't want the job. You want it, you can have it." No, no, they didn't want it. So I said, "Well, that's for them guys in the [unintelligible] there. Any of you want the [unintelligible] job you can have it."

So then they called me and they asked me to come in, after I put the time card and went into the office, they said "You got the job and Red's salary." Well, I said "I'll give it a week's time. If you don't satisfy me by the end of the week, or I'm not satisfying to you at the end of the week, let me know, and I'll step aside and you can pick [unintelligible]."

HS: So now you're also called a foreman?

RA: Hmm?

HS: You're called foreman?

RA: Yeah. For an extra 2 days now. [Laughing] I made 50 cents now, more than I was getting before. I wasn't getting anything! When I went down to the yard, I got two bits extra, went to the other yard – thought what the hell, that's two bits, a dollar a day more if I went down to the other yard, what the hell is that?

HS: Yeah. Yeah, right.

RA: So anyway, I was getting two dollars a day now, see. More than the men. Most of my men worked on installation, something else, they got much more than I got, you know. So anyways, I stayed on. Ran the dry dock, worked as a foreman for the next 10 years. Retired in 1980. My wife got so bad, you know – I had to take care of her.

HS: Yeah, and –

RA: Had to quit my career in the shipyard.

HS: Yeah, I wanted to go back and ask you just a couple of things, if I can. Um, one thing that kind of, we kind of missed on – just to go back for one minute – did you have anything to do with the 1946 General Strike? Did you see it or participate in it?

RA: '46?

HS: Yeah, the General Strike.

RA: Oh, the General Strike. No, I was in the army.

HS: Oh, you were still in the army.

RA: I was in the army and I didn't get out until forty – oh that was the Machinists strike, wasn't it? Hurley yard closed up? Yeah, all the yards closed up because of that.

HS: Yup.

RA: [unintelligible] closed up, Hurley closed up, on account of that strike.

HS: It was downtown Oakland.

RA: Yeah. I don't know about San Francisco.

HS: Well, this downtown Oakland was –

RA: Yeah, one was in Alameda, one was in Oakland. Naval yards. [unintelligible] all the yards were going out of business, when I came home them two yards went out of business. The yard across the street, Bethlehem, went out of business.

HS: Right.

RA: They all started going out of business. The strike put a lot of them out, they uh – United Engineering was in Alameda, where Todd was – that was United Engineering. I knew the man that owned that yard, sailed with him on a boat, he owned a big yacht. He went out of business, too. And then Matson took it over. When Matson got through, he uh – Todd took it over. Todd had it. They all went out of business now, they're all out – Todd, Moore's, Bethlehem – they're all out now.

HS: I know they are, I know they are. Um, yeah. Did you try doing pile driving at Crowley?

RA: Yeah, that's the one that I did most of the pile driving there. After the one I told you about [unintelligible]. That was where I did that.

HS: Oh, okay. Okay. That was at Crowley.

RA: That's Crowley.

HS: Okay, okay. So we got that one.

RA: Also, I [unintelligible] under the piers, got under the pier, and I put a new [unintelligible] on the pier, now when I was a pile driver I'd get a drum. A can, 50 gallon, cut the top and bottom out, drop it down over the pile, fill the hole full of cement. Protect the pile, you know. [unintelligible] keep the bugs out of it, you know. [unintelligible] Halfway eaten in, the bugs had eaten into it, and it's getting kinda wobbly, well I get a 50 gallon drum. Cut the bottom out, [unintelligible] drop it down over the dock, maybe two or three of them. Fine-mixed concrete, pour it down in there at low tide. Guess they pulled it all out now, they're all gone.

HS: Yeah. You mentioned one time, um, it was difficult being supervisor with black workers. Did you ever have any problem with black workers?

RA: Not too much, no. I had Jessie – oh, he and I got along perfect together. Oh, Jessie and I – we must have worked together 11 years. Worked on a couple things with him –

HS: Okay.

RA: I took him down to the army base one time, and it was his truck. Take some stuff down to the army base – we're coming down 2nd Street, and the cops pulled us over. And they said – windshield in the back of his truck, you couldn't see out of it, it was all melty – and he said, uh, "[unintelligible] officer?" He said, "You got a bad window – you can't see out of that window. We gotta write you up a ticket." He says, "If I can fix that in one minute – one second – will you not give me a ticket?" He [the officer] says, "You can fix it in one second, I won't write you a ticket." He [Jessie] put his hand around his pocket and went BANG! The window went out and into the truck. He says, "That okay enough for you?" "Oh, that's a beautiful clear window," they said. "Goodbye!" [Laughing]

HS: [Laughing] So he was a character!

RA: Oh yeah, he was a character. He came to work one morning – I'll never forget that morning – he came to work one morning, he had his shoes cut off. Got all his toes sticking out. And I said, "Jessie! You can't work like that. You can't have your toes sticking out like that. Wait 'till superintendent sees that, he's gonna be on me about that." And he did, he caught Jessie two minutes later. He said, "Did Red know you got shoes like that?" He said "Yeah he told me I can't have them no more, I gotta have other shoes. My toes hurt too much, my feet hurt." Well, what happened to him is unbelievable.

I got an order to take a [unintelligible] draw. It was all shackled, got big shackles over there. Big rubber [unintelligible]. Take them off, was going to paint the togs, put a new one on [unintelligible]. Well, we don't unscrew them shackles.

Get a torch and burn them off. Burn the shackles. [unintelligible] Well a shackle's worth a dollar, if you spend more time unscrewing the thing, you're getting paid three or four dollars an hour – burn it! Burn it off! Burn the shackle, flies in the water, trying to get a hold of it, lifts it right off and takes it away. Safe and easy.

Well I put him up to burn. He could burn. So I said, “Hey Jessie, will you burn them shackles off?” [unintelligible] Well he gets up and burns his shackles. [unintelligible] And he burns one, a big hot piece of metal about that big – raw, hot metal went down, went right between his big toe and the others and got stuck in there. He started hopping up and down like a – like a kangaroo! We couldn't hardly tie him down, you know. Oh boy, it burned him right down to the bone, you know. He was off for a month. [unintelligible] He couldn't sue us, because – he could have sued us if it had burned through his shoe, but he had his shoe cut so that saved us. “Jessie,” I said, “If you'd had your shoe on that wouldn't have happened. But you took your shoes off, and you were told not to do it [unintelligible].”

I had a guy come to me, when I hired the man he was a [unintelligible]. And he had tennis shoes on. And they're not – not allowed in the shipyard. Tennis shoes. And I told him, “If you're gonna work here you gotta get new shoes. You know, you get hard shoes on you come to work.” “Okay.” Well, the next day he came to work with tennis shoes, same thing. I said, “I told you yesterday you had to have them.” They were drilling for a gun platform. And he was helping the guy drill, holding the drill. And I said, “You can't work with tennis shoes here. I told you yesterday. Now you come tomorrow with good shoes on, or that's it.”

I was never very stiff, I mean – I know [unintelligible]. And I kind of laid the law down on them, of course. But the next day he came in with hard shoes on. Fine! The next day he comes back with tennis shoes. And my superintendent hit me and says, “Didn't you tell him not to wear tennis shoes in this yard?” And I says, “I told him if he had hard shoes on – yesterday he did, but now he's back with tennis shoes today.” “Lay him off.” So I went down, I says to him, “I got to lay you off. Listen, it's not my fault, it's your fault. If you'd have come with [unintelligible] shoes on you'd still have the job here, but – when it's your lunch time, it's time to go. Get half a day today. Three days you've been – four days you've been here.”

And the same – Jessie, he comes to me one day, he says, “I got to take off today. I got to go to the doctor's.” I said, “What's the matter?” He said, “Oh my knee is hurting me.” So I said, “Okay, take off.” Well he went away. The next day he come back. I said, “What did the doctor do for you?” He said, “Well the doctor took me in the room with him. He put his hand on my knee. He told me

to rest. He told me to take some aspirin. And he charged me five dollars.” I said, “Jessie, if you’d have come into MY office, I would have put my hand on your knee, I would have given you the aspirin, and only charged you two and a half!” [Laughing] “You wouldn’t have lost your day’s wages neither!”

HS: [Laughing] What period - era did Jessie work for you? What period of time?

RA: He worked in um...in the boat yard. He followed me up to the next job after I left there. He worked for Pacific – for Martinolli.

HS: Oh he did –

RA: Not when – not when – later on. All later on. Almost a year before I left there to go [unintelligible]. Then he followed me up to the other yard.

HS: So that was later –

RA: Laid him off, he came by, hired some more men. He came over – “Oh, hi Jessie! You got in.” Oh, he worked for me for several years down at the other yard.

HS: Okay. So this is in the mid 50s and 60s? Sounds like?

RA: Oh he was old [unintelligible], he was up in [unintelligible].

HS: I mean was that the period of time? Mid 50s, 1960s? That he worked?

RA: Yeah. Around ’54 I left there, you know.

HS: Yeah. Mmhmm. So –

RA: We worked together – we worked about – quite a few years, it was. He was very good on the...

HS: Do you have any other stories –

RA: ...[unintelligible] timbers.

HS: Any other stories about safety situations, or funny stories?

RA: Oh, yes. Well, funny stories. One of the things at the yard – we always had wooden staging. Wooden horses? Wooden horses. And they kept going and raising hell with the wooden horses. Now we repaired them, every time there was a broken leg with one of those wooden horses we took it over to the shop and

put a new leg in, whenever there was a man free. I had the horses there, and we'd put them – it was always horses with wooden legs on – put planking, put rods through the end of them, to keep them from sitting on the end. Well, it weren't good enough. So we got to get rid of them and put metal staging up.

So they got the metal staging and they want it rolling – a rolling metal staging, so they could roll it down the ships. They don't want that wooden staging anymore. You know your generation come with – they're changing the thing. Everyone's been using for forty, fifty years near, the wooden staging with one plank on it, now you have to have two planks on it. Now you have to have rails on the side of the thing, and we hate the rails. The guys would be saying, "Those damn rails, when you swing back with your [unintelligible] you hook onto the rail, and you lose your balance!" Many times when they had two staging planks on there, the planks would lap over the other plank – and I'd be backing up on the staging, they only step off that much – and I'd feel like I'd fall off the end of the world, you know.

And that night I'd jump into bed, you know. [unintelligible] Two o'clock in the morning I'd jump into bed, and my wife would tell me, "You've been on top of the staging again today." And I says, "Yeah. Backed off of one of them." [unintelligible] in your system – don't let it out until the end of the night. I says, "Oh a lot of things like that happen down at the yard, [unintelligible]." One of my carpenters...was he – no, he wasn't my carpenter. No, he was a – a laborer. No, he was my carpenter. He was my carpenter. He was up on the staging to fix something up on the – there was some sheeting up on the bow had to be taken down, I told him to go down and take off the old sheeting, we're not going to be putting any on, just take the old one off and then leave it off, when the anchor come up [unintelligible] the side of the ship.

He went to grab hold of the arm, and they came off. And down he went and threw his back out. I don't think he ever worked again, I don't know what happened to him, I never saw him no more. And then they want [unintelligible]. And I said I don't want a night shift. I've been in this yard for thirty years – forty years – and I've never had an accident. A man's never been cut by me. I don't cut in my shop. So I say, "You put a night shift on, you're going to have nothing but problems. I don't want a night shift." "Oh, but the boss says, [unintelligible] you gotta have a night shift." So I picked a crew to put the night shift [unintelligible]. I had two accidents in the first week! One guy cut his finger off with a band saw, another guy [unintelligible] – he did something to his hand. He split his hand down some way or the other...with a chisel. The chisel slipped over and he cut his hand. Nothing but – I told him, I said, "Nothing but trouble!" [unintelligible] I never had an accident in the yard.

HS: Did you – did you go back to day shift after that?

RA: That had nothing to do with the day shift.

HS: **Oh you didn't –**

RA: I was on the day shift. I wouldn't take a night shift. No, no. They wanted to put the night shift and I put a man in charge of the night shift.

HS: **Oh, I see, and that's when they had the accidents.**

RA: And that's when the accidents happened. I'd go on in the morning, pick up tools all over the yard! I'd find a saw here, hammer there, I went down in the morning find a saw here, planer there, finding stuff all over the yard and picking them up, and I said "What's fair, guys, leaving your tools all over the yard!" "Well, we can't see them in the dark!" They'd lose them in the dark. It's a bad thing. I went up on the roof to see, there was a fire in the lumber yard, the other side – when I worked for Martinolli, said, "Go up on the roof and see if there are no sparks flying up there." I went up I had my hammer, set my hammer down, poked around, went down and left my hammer on the roof. Left my hammer up there. Couldn't find my hammer nowhere. I said, "Somebody stole my hammer, can't find my hammer nowhere. Where in the hell's my hammer?"

One day, had a leak up on the roof. They wanted to see if I'd go up and fix the leak. It was raining. Went up on the roof to see where the leak was – big leak up on the roof – and there's my hammer sitting on the skylight, right where I left it. With the handle all twisted up. Sun had burned it out. So that was a kick. I fixed that leak. They had a leak up on the roof – that was Martinolli. When Crowley took it over. The superintendent called me into his office, he said, "I got a leak right over my desk," he says. I go up onto the roof, there's a big leak up there. Okay, what am I going to do with that. I hear the building going creak, creak, because it's raining and putting pressure on the piling down below, the water up there. The piling's getting rotted underneath. I said, "You move your desk and I'll bring up two fifty gallon drums." So I drill a hole up to the roof really quick, and all the water –

[End of Tape 5 – Side 9 (A) Part 7 of 10]

[Begin Tape 5 – Side 10 (B) Part 8 of 10]

HS: [mumbling] Okay.

RA: [unintelligible]. Well all the water was up there now. It'd stopped raining. I went down and kinda, what they call the deck threading. Got threads on the bottom, they put them on top of gas tanks, [unintelligible] up in the boats. [unintelligible] threw one down on

top of the deck with [unintelligible] underneath it, [unintelligible]. Then I went down, I screwed a pipe into that, put an elbow on the end of that – I’m doing a plumber’s job, now. So I got a long pipe to open this window – the window goes up and down, you know – two layer window – and I put the pipe out the window – about five feet outside the window. Put the [unintelligible] up against it. Then I went down and cut a board. Put a board so the air doesn’t blow on the inside of the window. He looked up and he said “Well, nice looking at that pipeline.” Well, that’s the only way I can fix it, you know, I mean...

Well it poured rain the next day. In between the rain and...I got a phone call. I hope the damn thing’s not leaking. I went up to the bosses’ door, and his secretary was laughing! I went up to his secretary, she says, “Conklin wants to see you in there, he has something he wants to tell you.” [Laughing] “Is it leaking?” “You go ahead in there and see it.” I went in there, and he says – there’s no leak in there, no water, the desk is sitting right where he wants it – he says, “Listen, Red. Listen to it.” And you hear it go gurgle, gurgle, gurgle. He says, “I can’t stand this gurgling!” The water was hitting the pipe and running out the window. [Laughing] Out in the yard. That pipe was there for years after I left there. And I said, “Well I’ll take care of the gurgle.” Well I went up and took a little piece of a shield, stuck it down in the pipe, and that stopped the gurgle.

HS: That stopped it making noise?

RA: That stopped the [making gurgling water noises].

HS: What was the guy’s name?

RA: Hmm?

HS: What was the guy’s name?

RA: Conklin.

HS: Conklin.

RA: Yeah, Jack Conklin.

HS: Jack Conklin.

RA: He’s getting [unintelligible] year by year here.

HS: [sighing]

RA: Two years ago...

HS: You know, you mentioned something awhile –

RA: I could go all day telling you stories about [unintelligible].

HS: Yeah, I know you could, which is um, well...

[Break in the recording]

HS: ...gun boat. You say this is a pile driving story?

RA: Well, it's not a pile driver. Didn't go down into the mud. [unintelligible] ...twelve by twelve timber, it was [unintelligible] to the top and the bottom. All went down about five feet in the low tide water. That's where the barges [unintelligible]. They got so bad the barges come in, they smash into them, they break them up. I told them, it costs so much, I said, "How come they're not sixteen feet apart? And I'll put a new one in every sixteen feet." Well, they get broke. I'll leave sixteen feet between, see. [unintelligible]

That was fine. So they bought me the twelve by twelves, and I cut them on the bevel, and I put a eye bolt in the top. [unintelligible] I had to hold all these [unintelligible], drive them in the side of the boat. Well, the crane operator was a nasty guy, and he made a betting court. He got a lot out of it, alright, but he wouldn't do anything for me. He had too many other things to do himself. He only had the one trailer. He had jobs to move this, move that, move this, move that – I said, "Hey, how about my piles?" "I'll get to you later. You're not so necessary." He cut me off, see.

So I went and made my own crane. I went and got a board, a big board, and I cleaned it up and put stippling on it. And I put a couple of them on the other end. Hooked it up to an [unintelligible] that went up and down, then I kind of balanced some lead bars on the other end of it, on the flat part. I got my [unintelligible] ready, I put a rope on it, I threw it overboard! [unintelligible] Fourteen feet long, threw it overboard, set the table down, had a guy on the boat [unintelligible] his ship, he'd hook it in for me and I'd pull it up. I'd hold my side. I said, "You can have your dang old crane, I got my own crane over here!" They all laughed at me. "We're going back to the days of the caveman," they say.

HS: [Laughing]

RA: Well, I put the pile in. I put the second pile in. I put a whole row of them in, run down the line, put a whole row of them, finally they run out of money and said they weren't going to put any more money into it. [Laughing] They only put so much money a year. Next year they'll put the rest of them in. Next year. Well, then another guy came in named [Pettico], he came in and took over all the work on the wharf, so I didn't have to do it. He took my little crane over.

HS: I see.

RA: I didn't [unintelligible].

HS: Now where was this? Was this at Crowley?

RA: No, Pacific – no, Mare. Back when Crowley took it over. Pacific...uh...Martinolli.

HS: When did Martinolli –

RA: They finally changed the name to Mare number two...they called it Mare shipyard, after. They changed from Martinolli to Mare – because it goes on Lake Mare. They went in on a lake and they called it Mare number two. Number one, number two. Then later on it became Pacific dry dock number two, that was after I went.

HS: Oh, after you left it became Pacific. Um, so it was known as Mare for a long time?

RA: It was Mare for quite a while, yeah.

HS: You'd mentioned at one point that the worked changed, in a sense that, um, the bottom of the vessels became bigger, and the cover became – [HS and RA talking at the same time]

RA: It was crazy, with the stuff that was coming out.

HS: When did that all start?

RA: [unintelligible] You couldn't get a block underneath without hitting them, you know. The coast guard was terrible. They put down – [unintelligible]. The dock went up on stilts, almost. Oh, God. It only got worse and worse. Gave me the willies, you know.

HS: When did it start changing?

RA: Hmm. About '75. Around '75, started changing. I know it's changed from then. Either I was getting older, or things were going – the younger generation coming in and raising hell, they're getting rid of the wooden ships. They wanted to get rid of all the wooden ships, they don't want no more wooden ships in the place, lot of wooden ships they've gotten rid of. Now these here, had twelve of them. We had twelve when I was working for Pacific dry dock, and they were – that was our bread and butter, to keep these things going. First we lost one – the Seawolf, burned up at sea. We'd just put a new – a new – broke a train shaft when the bars hit the stern and knocked the stern out of it. Big hole in the stern. They brought it in the yard, we laid the engine over on its side, put a new train shaft in it. On the inside we put a whole new stern in it, had it all

painted. Went up to Seattle and got a load of lumber, headed for Honolulu, and halfway to Honolulu a guy opened the [unintelligible] or something in the engine room, and it blew a flame out and set fire to the engine – they're all oil in there, so much oil from the engine, you know. The wood would soak up the oil, you know. [unintelligible] That thing burned like a Roman candle. The guys got off in a lifeboat. And airplane saw it and radioed it, and they sent the coast guard. And that was the first boat we lost.

Then we lost the Relief up north. It sunk up near Lake Washington, near Seattle. It went down with a barge, pulled the barge in a storm. They wouldn't cork the deck, the deck needed to be corked, and it got caught in a rain storm and waves came over the bow, and the deck leaked so bad that it flooded up with water, the pumps couldn't handle it, and it went down. They lost that one.

HS: Now, you called these Nickies, that's a type of tug?

RA: Yeah. Got this one here, right behind me. Then this one, the Seafox, this one here, was a new nice boat. It got hit by – went to go around a ship and it got hit. The ship run into it, pushed it in the side. It could have been saved, but Crowley sunk it and got the money. He took it up the river and sunk it up the river. He took everything out of it and sunk it up the river. Can't remember what the next one was...oh, the [Antarctic?]. Had one called the [Antarctic?]. She broke her train shaft. And then the uh...the Columbia! She broke her train shaft. They broke the train shaft. They took them up – and took them up the river.

HS: What do you mean by sunk them up the river?

RA: Well, take them up to – on the [unintelligible], up on the delta. And they'd sink them to make a [unintelligible] out of them. Hold the bank back. They'd load them up on sideways, and then they fill them with rocks. [unintelligible] then fill them with rock. Holds the bank back. Put one behind the other, you know. Then, [unintelligible] the next one is...oh, the Lark. The Lark had a crack in the crankshaft, and they said to remove an inch a year. The people at home – the engine people. I was in the fish room – the grotto down here in Oakland, and they were pulling the ship out over on the other side, over on the other side at Alameda, and the ship had a hole in the bow on the pier, and they were out there trying to swing the stern around. And I tell ya, I told my wife I said, "That crankshaft don't [unintelligible] it's a miracle because the way they're running that engine"...they run that engine, [unintelligible] first the guy revved up the engine with his car, pushed the pedal all the way to the floor and revved up the engine. [unintelligible] That poor boat. They just raised hell with them. [unintelligible] They marked over the [unintelligible]. They set fire to the galley, they raked the galley out, they...oh, I don't know how many different things. They broke all the masts off, the lightbulbs disappeared, they broke open the – they sent it all out to an aircraft carrier. Put it up on the flight deck, you know. They'd bust the mast off, lightbulbs went out, bust up all the windows, knock the front of the [unintelligible] up.

Then there was another one, which one did they...the Robin. They sent me to San Francisco to cork the Robin. They run it into the pier. Head right on into the pier! And they score the cutting board back two inches. There's a gap, two inches there. They told me to [unintelligible], cork it up, and I took one look and I said "I can't cork that one over." [unintelligible]. Put a piece of rope in there. "Well, you gotta go down to Bethlehem ship yard, put it up on dry dock." A victory ship, put it on dry dock. They took it out of mothballs. I said, "Okay, I'll ride along with you." I'll get some [batten?] – I'll pick up some [batten] from the dock you know, old pieces of crates. Put these [unintelligible] alongside it.

Well, on the way down, I noticed that [unintelligible]...it's only about an inch and three quarters, now, seemed like it would be pretty good. So, we laid alongside the victory ship. And they tied off. To a [unintelligible] mid ship. The dry dock – the big dry dock in Bethlehem shipyard was going down, [unintelligible]. But the [Seafox?] came along and put their nose right up against us in mid ships. Then when the dry dock was down they gave us the signal, the dry dock was down, they helped pull us and the ship all back from the dock. Then we [unintelligible] made it back this way. Well we got back even, and the Robin – the other ships pushed us in. They dropped us. They took off, and we pushed the ship up into the dock where they could get a hold of it. [unintelligible] They took it to the dock, back – push it in. Pull us out away from the dock, twenty, fifteen feet, then we backed up, then they pushed us in.

When I looked back again, the crack was gone. The ship had pulled right back to where it was supposed to be. So, I come back over. I go home. The company says to me, "Did you get it corked?" "Oh yeah, corked perfect." "Well I see you took the same [unintelligible] you brought back." "Oh yeah, I done this and a little of that. I fixed it. Don't worry about it, it's all fixed." "Okay, you say it's fixed, it's fixed." Okay, don't hear no more about it, [unintelligible].

They had another job come in there one day to lift a whole [unintelligible] up. They call me at six o'clock at night, go back down. Make a call and get another carpenter to go down there, and they said, "We gotta have it by tomorrow morning!" Another guy wanted to tear the top off. I said, "No no no no! Clean out all the little whiskers from underneath. All the little broken pieces of wood, and I'll go get an eye bolt and put an eye bolt in the top. Put a – there was an eye bolt in the deck hall already. I gotta [unintelligible] – we pulled it right down. [unintelligible] We worked on it near midnight, you know. And now it's down in place. Well I said, "The only thing we can do – I don't want to stay here all night – let's put a table on it. We'll [unintelligible] the table. It'll be like a stay, to hold it down." I could still walk by it, get by. Then when they come back in next time, I told them, I says, I told the captain, I said, "Next time you come into dry dock, we'll put a new bolt down through it." "Okay fine." Ten years later, it's still loading with that table on it. They never did anything about it.

HS: They never did.

RA: The table's still holding it down. [unintelligible] seemed like that one went on forever, going on over and over again. [unintelligible]

HS: You – you – it sounds like you did a lot of tugboats?

RA: Yeah, that's what Crowley was –

HS: Oh, Crowley.

RA: That yard was built for him. For his yard.

HS: Yeah, for his yard.

RA: To dock his own boat.

HS: Did he ever do other boats?

RA: Yeah!

HS: He did?

RA: Oh, he did other boats.

HS: Oh, he didn't mention –

RA: Yeah, he did other boats. Whenever we would slack, he'd take a Navy job or a Coast Guard job. But we had to make sure they didn't interfere with his job.

HS: Right, with his tugboats. Yeah.

RA: Now, when they started getting rid of the [Nickies], when they started getting rid of them – breaking them up, getting rid of them – what do you think I wound up with. They bought all new tugs. Big steel tugs, bought them down in Texas some place. And they bring them in and had to rebuild when they got up here. Now, they have two tow tables on the back. Big tow winches. And they use a – they use a two and a half inch steel wire on there. Two thousand feet of wire on that spool. On the drum. And they got an eye on the – splice an eye on the other end. Now, they got a timer on there, like a thermometer. And as the ship moves, that tells the miles that the ships move. And they move – I don't know how many miles – 70,000 miles [RA repeats the phrase "70,000 miles" several more times]. You got an end in that table. Only put out about a thousand feet. Now you got another thousand feet on that drum that's never been off that drum, see. So, the cable's [unintelligible]. It's got broken wires...it's got...it's

been dragged on the bottom, rocks have torn at it, you know, maybe hit some wreck or something with it and tore a piece out, something bad.

So what's it do, they're going to end it. Put the [unintelligible] up on the drum, put the [unintelligible]. Well, first thing to do in an operation, first thing you do, you put the – bring the clean-up wheel, pull the cable off, round the pier, put it on the snatch bar, pull it up on the dock and we cut the eye off. Take it onto a machine built for it. We built the machine ourselves, the cable one, I think there's a picture of it in that – you'll find a cable winder in there, I think. Show me running this cable winder.

HS: Yeah.

RA: Maybe I can find it for you. This is one of my gang, here. There I am, there – cutting the timber. [unintelligible] Then they picked up a crane, shipped it on a crane. Here I am up on here, see – there's my gang. We built the dry dock.

HS: Yeah.

RA: We built it right on here. There I am on the Lark, I found it there, we put all new planks in the side. I hit the side of the head with a [unintelligible].

HS: And you worked on the Fair too?

RA: Oh yeah. The Fair, the Walt [unintelligible], all of them.

HS: You worked on all the ones that are diesel –

RA: Oh yeah, I got pictures of them. Dozens and dozens. Here we are! There's the cable winder. [unintelligible]

HS: Yeah, it's huge.

RA: They put that drum on there, then they wind the wire up on the cable, on there, the whole two thousand feet. Then the crane operator – the crane picks it up and puts it over on the other end and they run it – they run it back on the steel again. Then they got it back on the steel, now they take it back down and run it back on the ship again. A whole damn day's job. Two thousand feet of cable, it don't move fast. It moves very slow. Whole day job, see. We'd do that. And you're tired, and you want to go home. "Oh Red, you gotta splice the eye on the end before you go home. Because the boat's going out tomorrow morning." Oh God, I want to go home. Splicing a big plow steel cable is a pain in the neck! You got to put it into a clamp and squeeze it up, then you got to break all the wire loose, then you got to drive a twist through there, another slice through there, then bring that wire around, poke it through. All the way up the line, do that about that far. God, you're just about dead when you get through. I get home at nine and fall in

bed and never knew I hit the pillow. And then the next morning the boat is still sitting there.

HS: [Laughing]

RA: Sitting there for a week.

HS: I'll be damned.

RA: Oh, that happened so many times, they'd say "Red, you gotta get this ship done by Friday night. I'd break my neck, work until nine o'clock every night, and my whole crew getting it done. I'd come back Monday morning and the ship's still sitting there. And I'd say, "What's this about?" "Well, they decided last minute to put another ship in its place." "Well, why didn't you think about that before I put in all that overtime!" I'm not looking for overtime, I'm looking to go home with my family. To hell with your overtime.

HS: Mm-hmm.

RA: But uh, that's the way it goes. There are so many more things that happened around the yard. There's Harry Green, the head of the uh – you ever know him? Harry Green?

HS: No, I didn't.

RA: Yeah, he was in charge of all the maritime ships, over in San Francisco.

HS: Oh yeah, I remember the name.

RA: Yeah, he – he worked for the state, I guess. Real friendly. He was a shipwright, originally. I built that tug for him.

HS: Yeah, that's great. That's a model of one.

RA: Yeah, that's a model of one over in San Francisco, there. [Hercules?]

HS: Yeah. When you'd work on ones like the Thayer, where would you work on those? Would they be brought over?

RA: Oh they'd bring them over.

HS: They'd be bringing them over.

RA: We'd put them up on dry dock, there's a picture here. I got pictures over here, right here.

HS: Why did you have to um, rebuild some of these vessels from Texas that you mentioned?

RA: Oh, bunch of cowboys build them down there. Crowley had a – I tell you what, Crowley had a screen. He'd have the ship built. Then when it finally gets about half along the haul, they cancel the job out. Then they bring it up to us. And we rebuild it. And they claim – they claim that as a repair job. They get a write-off on it. The ship was completed down there, they can't do that.

HS: Oh yes.

RA: They'd have all kind of [unintelligible] and stuff to do things. You know. Get by with it.

HS: [Laughing] Right. When did you get – um, during this whole period of time you're also building all these models.

RA: Yeah, at night, after working at night.

HS: Working at night. Mm-hmm.

RA: Here's a sheeting job for – these are mine sweepers. That's all sheeting on them.

HS: Oh, that's all sheeting.

RA: Put up a new sheeting on.

HS: Red, you had a cute story once about um, a gift of a stuffed seagull. From relatives after you retired.

RA: Oh, that's my – my daughter did that on me. It's in there in the living room. They wanted me to have a pet. Oh, here's a cute job here. See this thing here? [unintelligible]

HS: That's amazing.

RA: See, they put that – they crank that down. What they call a [unintelligible] in there. And then [unintelligible] for a submarine. And this thing is – that's a case. What you see – you don't see – they've taken the screws all out of this. This thing will come away from there. And it's full of some kind of a liquid. Green liquid. It takes care of it. Now it's all electrical, see. This stays on the ship, that thing's on the ship, and this thing's on the bottom. Now, you put it in dry dock, you gotta miss these [unintelligible] boxes, see, you got to leave these two out, see, so you don't hit them. See this other

[unintelligible] here?

HS: Yeah. When was this picture taken?

RA: Oh, taken around about...mid 70's somewhere.

HS: Okay.

RA: I don't know. I put all these in –

HS: Is this some kind of a sounding system for –

RA: It is. It's a sounding system for a submarine.

HS: For submarines.

RA: They listen and it tells them if it's a submarine near them, they hear the propeller curve.

HS: Yeah.

RA: And uh...so anyways, I put the ship on dry dock. And the guy was sick. He was sick, the dock master, was sick. So they said, "Well Red, you put it on the dock. Put it on the dock for them." So they gave me the measurements for it. Both laid out twenty feet on either side, see. So there was nothing in the middle to hit anything when it goes down. Well, I put it on dry dock and it was coming up on the dry dock, I see a lot of green stuff running down into the water, and I go, "What in the hell is that?" And uh, I hear the guy [unintelligible].

HS: What kind of vessel is this?

RA: Minesweeper.

HS: Minesweeper. Mm-hmm.

RA: It was a minesweeper. So anyway, sure enough, we hit the first block with it. Tore the whole casing right off. That's where all that green stuff – I saw it all and I thought, "Oh, I'm in for it now." That's the trouble – that's the trouble in this ship building business, you know. So, they says, "Oh yeah, you did it now!" The inspector comes along, "Well, you gotta pay for that casing. You broke that casing. You gotta get a new casing." So I went up, looked over my drawing again. Come to find out they'd given me a different ship. It wasn't the same – it was their fault. Here I am, putting the ship on dry dock. Here I am up on a boat.

HS: Yeah.

RA: Here's a sail with a whole bow out of her. I don't know if you can see, it's got the whole bow out of it. That's where you saw the picture of the guy hitting it with a hammer. Working on it.

HS: **Yeah. So, um, they had made a mistake.**

RA: They had made a mistake. They sent it – here's the Fair, the same picture, see. We're putting new planks in. See how thick them planks are? How big they are?

HS: **Oh they are big, yeah.**

RA: Well, anyway. When I went up and checked the drum I got a hold of the um...the inspector, I said to him, "Lookit here. You gave me the wrong drawing. This is another ship. The wrong blueprint. You sent the blueprint for this ship and then you sent a different ship to me."

HS: **[Laughing]**

RA: Now [unintelligible] I didn't catch it, but it finally dawned on me that it wasn't the same number on the side of the ship, and the same number on my paper. So I went back to look at it. So I didn't pay no attention, you know when they [unintelligible]. I don't pay no attention to the numbers, they ships are all in one category, one ship to the other. So anyway, they went and checked it again and said, "Yeah, you're right Red, this is our fault. We sent the wrong ship to you. We'll send a new case down to you from Maryland Navy yard. You won't have to – company won't have to pay for it."

HS: **Mm-mm. Yup.**

RA: Put the new case up, and before they put the liquid back in there, they had to air test it. Well the plumber blew it up.

HS: **[Laughing]**

RA: Put too much air and blew the seal to pieces. But I was free!

HS: **You're free. Yeah, yeah. Now, your family gave you the seagull. But there was a –**

RA: Oh yeah, my daughter – my daughter wanted me to have a – when I lost my wife. I lost my wife eight years ago. '89, I lost my wife. They wanted me to come and move in with them and I said, "No way." "Well then I want you to have a pet." "No, I have a pet. I got a rabbit for a pet." I had him ten years, out there. I got him spoiled so bad, I got a piece of toast for him every morning. He don't get that piece of toast – I took a

piece of bread out, he won't eat it, but if I toast it then he'll eat it. So anyway, I got him spoiled rotten.

HS: [Laughing]

RA: I have to pet him – every time I go by, I got to pet him. Scratch his back, pull his ears, and tickle his nose. If I don't do that he tears the cage apart. Pulls the cage, pulls the door, raises holy hell out there. So I go out and pet him, pull his ears, tickle his nose – well anyways, they wanted me to have a dog. And I says, "I don't want no dog." "Well you're gonna have a cat, a kitten for a pet." They think I have to have some kind of pet. I said, "I got a rabbit for a pet. The rabbit's the best pet you can get. They don't bark, they don't have no fleas, they don't – they just want to be cuddled all the time. They don't wanna be – don't have to bother too much with them, the cold weather don't bother them." The heat does bother him though, I got to keep him in out of the heat.

Well, Christmas time they came with a box, with a whole bunch of holes punched in it. I says, "I told you, I said I don't want a pet. Now you take that damn pet back with you, I don't want him." I said, "I told you I warned you, I'm a very achy old guy." I said, "Don't push me over the edge. When I tell you four, five times I don't want a pet, I got my own pet I want out there." I says, "You want to get me a turtle or something like that, okay, but not – not a cat or a dog. Well, here, they hand me the box. I don't hear anything. I move the box I hear some scratching inside. I open it up a bit to look in the box, and it's that – a stuffed seagull. I got him in a chair in here.

HS: Yeah.

RA: You seen him?

HS: Oh, I think so.

RA: Well, he's in there. Oh, I got to sit up. [unintelligible]

HS: Me too.

RA: It's too long.

[Break in recording]

HS: Yeah the seagull, by the way, is not a stuffed seagull. It is a cloth seagull. It's um, like a big model of a seagull, but it's a cloth seagull. It's not a stuffed seagull. And its name is Oscar. And um, we sure appreciate Red putting up with uh, all of our questions, all day long. Um, so thank you. Thank you very much.

[End of Tape 5 – Side 10 (B) Part 10 of 10]

End of the recording]